

Translation of Empire:

Mongol Legacy, Language Policy, and the Early Ming World Order, 1368-1453

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Abbreviations

Ar.	Arabic
Chin.	Chinese
HYDCD	<i>Hanyu Da Cidian</i> 漢語大詞典 [<i>Comprehensive Chinese Word Dictionary</i>]
LL	linguistic landscape
LLS	Linguistic Landscape Studies
Mong.	Mongolian
Pers.	Persian
s.v.	<i>sub verbo</i> (referring to a reference in a dictionary)

ABSTRACT

This thesis approaches two perennial and interrelated problems in the historiography of China—the question of the openness or self-isolation of (Ming) Chinese society, as well as the nature and extent of the Mongol legacy in the (early) Ming—from a new angle. In spite of a growing body of scholarship on political, military, and institutional aspects of the transition from ‘foreign’ Mongol Yuan (1271-1368) to ‘native’ Ming (1368-1644) rule, there is one aspect that has received little attention so far: *language*, or rather *languages* in the plural, and translation between them. By bringing the various multilingual dimensions of the early Ming to the foreground of analysis and studying them against the backdrop of the Mongol legacy, this thesis covers new ground. While recognising that not all activities with which it is concerned would have been seen as connected by early Ming actors, this thesis argues that they do collectively constitute a realm of action with a common purpose, which we can comprehend as ‘language policy.’ This perspective is significant, because Yuan continuities on macro levels (administrative, institutional, political) can only be truly grasped through a systematic investigation of micro levels, such as language. To achieve these aims, the thesis blends concepts and methods from history, sinological philology, and Linguistic Landscape Studies (LLS).

My argument is threefold. First, the Mongol heritage was not just perceptible in institutions and newly absorbed territory but also on the level of language. Second, the early Ming, far from being ‘fiercely anti-Mongol’ (as one authority recently put it), consciously attempted to imitate and surpass the Yuan, and multilingualism—for both communicative and emblematic reasons—played an important part in this endeavour. Third, and most importantly, the year 1368 marked neither a ‘revolutionary’ rupture nor a ‘business as usual’ continuation of Mongol legacies. Rather, the new dynasty attempted to strike a difficult balance, in which language and translation policies were instrumental in harmonising the needs for both continuity with *and* a break from the past. The Ming continued Yuan traditions such as the production of multilingual steles and edicts to symbolise and enforce their universal imperial claim, while Chinese was (not *de jure*, but *de facto*) reinstituted as the major imperial language, as opposed to one imperial language among many, as in Mongol times. The very notion of universal empire, continued from Yuan to Ming, would be at odds with monolingualism, and consequently, the Ming could not have been monolingual, even if they had so desired. While the distinction between ‘multilingual foreign’ dynasties (Yuan, Qing) and ‘monolingual Chinese’ ones (Ming) is not outright wrong, it does need considerable refinement, in order to understand the Ming’s place in the larger Yuan-Ming-Qing transition.

‘Translation of empire’ has a double meaning in this thesis. First, it is meant literally in the sense of language mediation: textual legacies of the Yuan were translated from languages such as Mongolian or Persian into Chinese, while the new empire translated its claim to power into other languages. Second, it is a metaphor alluding to the political concept of *translatio imperii*, known from Western Eurasian history and comparable to the Chinese ‘dynastic cycle’ narrative: fundamentally the idea of cultural mobility, with knowledge and power moving from empire to empire. How did the Yuan-Ming transition work as a *translatio imperii* in both senses of the word and what can we conclude from it regarding the nature of the early Ming?

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Conventions

Translations

All translations from classical and modern Chinese (Persian, Latin, French, German) into English and all forms of punctuation of classical Chinese texts are mine, unless otherwise stated.

Chinese characters

Chinese characters are written in the traditional script (*fantizi* 繁體字) throughout the current thesis, even in the few cases where the original text used simplified characters (*jiantizi* 簡體字).

Referencing Chinese sources

Court-produced historiography, in particular primary sources such as the *Ming shilu* [*Veritable Records of the Ming*] or the *Mingshi* [*History of the Ming*], are referenced based on their own internal division, not on written publications of the texts. For example,

“*Veritable Records of the Ming*, Hongwu, *juan* 26, 401”

refers to *juan* (scroll) 26 of the Hongwu era part of the *Veritable Records of the Ming*. 401 refers to the internal standard pagination. These sources have been accessed in digitised form on the database *Scripta Sinica* (*Hanji quanwen ziliaoku* 漢籍全文資料庫, run by *Academia Sinica* 中央研究院) through the virtual library *CrossAsia* of the *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin*. See the bibliography for a list of sources accessed through *Scripta Sinica*.

Transcription systems

Chinese transcriptions

All Chinese words and names are romanised according to *Hanyu pinyin* 漢語拼音.

Persian and Arabic transcriptions

All Persian and Arabic words and names are romanised as shown below. While the system follows mainly DMG (*Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft*) conventions, in some cases standards of the ALA-LC (*American Library Association - Library of Congress*) have been preferred. My aim was to avoid diacritics, if possible, and to keep transcriptions for the two languages close to one another.

	Used transcription for Arabic words:	Used transcription for Persian words:	Perso-Arabic letter:
Short vowels:	a u i	a u i	
Long vowels	ā ū ī	ā ū ī	ا و ي
Consonants	ʾ b t th j ḥ kh d dh r z s sh ṣ ḍ ṭ ẓ ʿ gh f q k l m n h w y	ʾ b p t s j ch ḥ kh d dh r z zh s sh ṣ z ṭ ẓ ʿ gh f q k g l m n h v	ء ب پ ت ث ج چ ح خ د ذ ر ز ژ س ش ص ض ط ظ ع غ ف ق ك گ ل م ن ه و ي

Index of primary sources

Titles of Chinese works are given in the Chinese original and a standardised English translation whenever mentioned for the first time. Henceforth they are referred to by standardised English titles. For classical Chinese works, such as the *Mingshi* or the *Da Ming huidian*, I use those titles that are most common in the existing anglophone literature. For those works that are less known but central to the approach of the current thesis (e.g. the *Siyi guan ze* or the *Tianwenshu*), I have created standardised titles that reflect my understanding of these works. A list can be found below for reference.

I. Alphabetic list of standardised English titles

<i>Book on Heavenly Patterns</i>	<i>Tianwenshu</i> 天文書 (1383)
<i>Book of Rites</i>	<i>Liji</i> 禮記 (Warring States / Qin)
<i>Calculation of the Motion of the Seven Celestial Bodies</i>	<i>Qizheng tuibu</i> 七政推步 (1477)
<i>Canon of the Western Astronomical System</i>	<i>Xiyu lifa tongjing</i> 西域曆法通經 (early 15th century)
<i>Collected Statutes of the Great Ming</i>	<i>Da Ming huidian</i> 大明會典 (1587)
<i>Collection of Muslim Prescriptions</i>	<i>Huihui yaofang</i> 回回藥方 (late Yuan / early Ming)
<i>Compendium of Chronicles</i>	<i>Jāmi' al-tawārīkh</i> (ca. 1300-1318)
<i>Complete Library of the Four Branches of Learning</i>	<i>Siku quanshu</i> 四庫全書 (1773-1782)
<i>Daily Additions to Knowledge</i>	<i>Rizhilu</i> 日知錄 (1695)
<i>Essentials in the History of Calligraphy</i>	<i>Shushi huiyao</i> 書史會要 (mid 14th century)
<i>Great Canon of the Yongle Era</i>	<i>Yongle Dadian</i> 永樂大典 (1408)
<i>Great Ming Code</i>	<i>Da Ming lü</i> 大明律 (1397)
<i>Great Ming Statutes</i>	<i>Da Ming ling</i> 大明令 (1368)
<i>Hanging Scroll from the 'Hall of the Great' Observer Ma in Nanjing</i>	<i>Nanjing Dace tang Ma guazhou</i> 南京大測堂馬掛軸 (comp. early 20th century)
<i>History of the World Conqueror</i>	<i>Tārīkh-i Jahāngushāy</i> (1259)
<i>Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Countries</i>	<i>Haiguo tuzhi</i> 海國圖志 (1844)
<i>Inspection of the Bureau of Translators</i>	<i>Siyi guan kao</i> 四夷館考 (c.1580)
<i>Islamic System of Mathematical Astronomy</i>	<i>Huihui lifa</i> 回回曆法 (1380s)
<i>Liu Family Harbour Stele</i>	<i>Liujiagang bei</i> 劉家港碑 (1431)
<i>Ma Genealogy from the Truth-Gathering Hall</i>	<i>Juzhen tang Ma Shi zongpu</i> 聚貞堂馬氏宗譜 (comp. early 20th century)
<i>Ming History</i>	<i>Mingshi</i> 明史 (ca. 1736-1739)
<i>Mongolian Translations and Transcriptions</i>	<i>Menggu yiyu</i> 蒙古譯語 (ca. 1279-1294)
<i>Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores</i>	<i>Yingya shenglan</i> 瀛涯勝覽 (1451)
<i>Regulations for the Bureau of Translators</i>	<i>Siyi guan ze</i> 四譯館則 (1630)
<i>Report about the Countries of the Western Regions</i>	<i>Xiyu fanguo zhi</i> 西域番國志 (1415)
<i>Secret History of the Mongols</i>	<i>Yuanchao mishi</i> 元朝秘史 (translated in the early Ming)
<i>Sino-Barbarian Translations and Transcriptions</i>	<i>Huayi yiyu</i> 華夷譯語 (1389)
<i>Supplement to the 'Abundant Meanings of the Great Learning'</i>	<i>Daxue yanyi bu</i> 大學衍義補 (1487)
<i>Veritable Records of the Ming</i>	<i>Ming shilu</i> 明實錄 (ca. 1418-1644)
<i>Yuan History</i>	<i>Yuanshi</i> 元史 (1369-70)

II. Alphabetic list of original titles

see above (list of English titles) for years of compilation/publication

Da Ming huidian 大明會典
Da Ming ling 大明令
Da Ming lü 大明律
Daxue yanyi bu 大學衍義補

Huayi yiyu 華夷譯語
Huihui lifa 回回曆法
Huihui yaofang 回回藥方
Jāmi' al-tawārīkh
Juzhen tang Ma Shi zongpu
聚貞堂馬氏宗譜

Liji 禮記
Liujiagang bei 劉家港碑
Menggu yiyu 蒙古譯語
Mingshi 明史 (ca. 1736-1739)
Ming shilu 明實錄
Nanjing Dace tang Ma guazhou
南京大測堂馬掛軸
Qizheng tuibu 七政推步

Shushi huiyao 書史會要
Siku quanshu 四庫全書
Siyi guan ze 四譯館則
Siyi guan kao 四夷館考
Tārīkh-i Jahāngushāy
Tianwenshu 天文書
Xiyou fanguo zhi 西域番國志
Xiyou lifa tongjing 西域曆法通經
Yingya shenglan 瀛涯勝覽
Yongle Dadian 永樂大典
Yuanchao mishi 元朝祕史
Yuanshi 元史 (1369-70)

Collected Statutes of the Great Ming
Great Ming Statutes
Great Ming Code
*Supplement to the 'Abundant Meanings
of the Great Learning'*
Sino-Barbarian Translations and Transcriptions
Islamic System of Mathematical Astronomy
Collection of Muslim Prescriptions
Compendium of Chronicles
Ma Genealogy from the Truth-Gathering Hall

Book of Rites
Liu Family Harbour Stele
Mongolian Translations and Transcriptions
Ming History
Veritable Records of the Ming
*Hanging Scroll from the 'Hall of the Great Observer
Ma' in Nanjing*
*Calculation of the Motion of the Seven Celestial
Bodies*
Essentials in the History of Calligraphy
Complete Library of the Four Branches of Learning
Regulations for the Bureau of Translators
Inspection of the Bureau of Translators
History of the World Conqueror
Book on Heavenly Patterns
Report about the Countries of the Western Regions
Canon of the Western Astronomical System
Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores
Great Canon of the Yongle Era
Secret History of the Mongols
Yuan History

III. Short titles

For the sake of readability, I will often refer to crucial primary sources using the following short titles:

Full title	Short title
<i>Book on Heavenly Patterns</i>	<i>Heavenly Patterns</i>
<i>Collected Statutes of the Great Ming</i>	<i>Collected Statutes</i>
<i>Compendium of Chronicles</i>	<i>Compendium</i>
<i>Complete Library of the Four Branches of Learning</i>	<i>Complete Library</i>
<i>Great Canon of the Yongle Era</i>	<i>Great Canon</i>
<i>Hanging Scroll from the ‘Hall of the Great Observer Ma’ in Nanjing</i>	<i>Nanjing Scroll</i>
<i>Inspection of the Bureau of Translators</i>	<i>Inspection</i>
<i>Islamic System of Mathematical Astronomy</i>	<i>Islamic Astronomy</i>
<i>Ma Genealogy from the Truth-Gathering Hall</i>	<i>Ma Genealogy</i>
<i>Mongolian Translations and Transcriptions</i>	<i>Mongolian Translations</i>
<i>Overall Survey of the Ocean’s Shores</i>	<i>Overall Survey</i>
<i>Regulations for the Bureau of Translators</i>	<i>Regulations</i>
<i>Secret History of the Mongols</i>	<i>Secret History</i>
<i>Sino-Barbarian Translations and Transcriptions</i>	<i>Sino-Barbarian Translations</i>

About the author

Johannes S. Lotze received his Magister degree in Chinese Studies and History from the *Freie Universität Berlin* in 2012. From 2008 to 2009, he studied Chinese language at *Nanjing University* 南京大學 in China. Previously, he had studied Political Science, Philosophy, and Film Studies at *Freie Universität Berlin*. In September 2012, he began his PhD in Chinese Studies at the *University of Manchester*, supported through a three-year *President's Doctoral Scholar* (PDS) scholarship.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Argument and research questions

Mongol legacy in the Ming 明 dynasty (1368-1644), or the nature of post-Mongol China, is an emerging, distinct field of study.¹ What kind of ‘China’ succeeded the Mongol-ruled Yuan 元 dynasty (1271-1368), which had itself been a *khanate* of the larger Mongol empire (1206-1368)? One strand of Chinese and Western scholarship has traditionally portrayed the Ming as an exclusively Chinese regime, whose founding was a break from Mongol rule, born out of “nationalistic revulsion.”² During the last half-century, however, some have questioned this view. While Henry Serruys (1911-1983) showed the persistence of Mongol customs after 1368, Romeyn Taylor discovered continuities between their military systems.³ Shortly after Li Zefen 李則芬 drew attention to early Ming rulers’ positive views of the Mongols, Edward Dreyer (1940-2007) provocatively interpreted the Ming as ‘Chinese’ in rhetoric and personnel but ‘Mongol’ in form and structure.⁴ While Dreyer was once criticised for overemphasising the continuity of Yuan institutions and ideals, today his views on the Mongols’ vital influences seem much more acceptable. This is due to fundamentally new insights into the role of the Mongols in world history, as well as to the realisation that the dramatic changes brought about by the Mongol empire affected *all* of its successor states, including the Ming. In particular, David M. Robinson’s work has shown the existence of a Yuan legacy on many more levels than Serruys, Taylor, Li, or Dreyer had previously imagined, reaching from martial spectacles to the cosmopolitan composition of the Ming court.⁵

¹ Central historiographical issues and debates in scholarship will be discussed in the next section. Here, I present the big picture and demonstrate the original approach and contribution of this thesis.

² Charles O. Hucker (1975), *China’s Imperial Past: An Introduction to Chinese History and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 288.

³ Henry Serruys (1957), “Remains of Mongol Customs in China During the Early Ming Period,” *Monumenta Serica* 16, 137-190; Romeyn Taylor (1963), “Social Origins of the Ming Dynasty, 1351-1360,” *Monumenta Serica* 22, 60; and (1969), “Yuan Origins of the Wei-So System,” in Charles Hucker (ed.), *Chinese Government in Ming Times* (New York: Columbia University Press), 24-25.

⁴ Li, Zefen 李則芬 (1979), *Yuanshi xinjiang 元史新講 [A New History of the Yuan]* (Taipei: Zhonghua shuju); Edward Leslie Dreyer (1982), *Early Ming China: A Political History, 1355-1435* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 76-87.

⁵ David M. Robinson (ed.) (2008), *Culture, Courtiers, and Competition: The Ming Court (1368-1644)* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center); (2013), *Martial Spectacles of the Ming Court* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center).

In spite of this growing body of scholarship on various political, military and institutional legacies in the Yuan-Ming transition, there is one aspect that has received little attention to date. The Mongol empire and its court were not only cosmopolitan but also highly multilingual: it is therefore important to consider whether or not there is a Mongol legacy in terms of *language*, or rather *languages* in the plural, and translation. When and if language comes into focus, it primarily still refers to speech varieties of Chinese. When the *Society for Ming Studies*, in April 2016, held a panel on “Language in the Ming,” only one of the three speakers looked at a non-Chinese language (Korean).⁶ This thesis covers new ground by bringing languages, as a relatively overlooked element in the transition, to the foreground of analysis. In its larger approach, it draws inspiration from recent studies on the Ming’s princely courts and imperial clansmen by Chan Hok-lam 陳學霖 (1938-2011), David M. Robinson, Craig Clunas, Jérôme Kerlouégan, and others.⁷ While the existence of princes or kings (*wang* 王) and their houses or courts (*wangfu* 王府) had not been unknown before these works appeared within the last decade, it cannot be denied that they figured only minimally in traditional studies. The above-mentioned authors, however, illustrated their significance so systematically as to cause a perceptual shift. A similar shift had taken place earlier regarding the role of women: the existence of a large and influential population of ‘writing women’ in late imperial China, still doubted in the 1990s, is today firmly established.⁸ Yet another shift is the growing awareness that even a colossal empire such as the Ming was a polity among many, and can only be understood in a larger Eurasian context and as part of an ensemble of post-Mongol societies. Thomas Allsen, in this vein, showed that the Ming shared repertoires of rule with courts across Eurasia, such as the royal hunt.⁹

⁶ Namely, Wang Sixiang 王思翔 in his talk “Language and Empire: Asymmetries of Knowledge/Power in Early Modern China-Korea Relations.” The other two speakers discussed spoken ‘Mandarin’ in the Ming (Richard Vanness Simmons) and dialect in fiction and drama (Catherine Swatek). The panel was held at the Sheraton Seattle Hotel, 1 April 2016.

⁷ Chan Hok-lam 陳學霖 (2007), “Ming Taizu’s Problems with His Sons, Prince Qin’s Criminality and Early Ming Politics” *Asia Major* 20, 45-103; Jérôme Kerlouégan (2011-2012), “Printing for Prestige? Publishing and Publications by Ming Princes,” *East Asian Publishing and Society* 1, 39-73, 105-44; and 2, 3-75, 109-98; David M. Robinson (2012), “Princely Courts in the Ming Dynasty,” *Ming Studies* 65, 1-12; Richard G. Wang (2012), “The Ming Princely Patronage of Daoist Temples,” *Ming Studies* 65, 57-92; Craig Clunas (2013), *Screen of Kings: Royal Art and Power in Ming China* (London: Reaktion Books).

⁸ Harriet Thelma Zurndorfer (1999), *Chinese Women in the Imperial Past: New Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill), was the breakthrough. A systematic study of the power of women in the early Ming is Ellen Soulliere (2016), “The Writing and Rewriting of History: Imperial Women and the Succession in Ming China, 1368-1457,” *Ming Studies* 73, 2-29.

⁹ Thomas T. Allsen (2006), *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press).

What do princes, women, and Eurasia have in common, and what could they possibly have to do with language and translation? They all share a common fate: their significant roles in the history of China have been minimised in court-produced historiography and, thus, in the secondary literature. This thesis aims to lay the foundation for a shift in the realm of languages and translation that is comparable to the shifts outlined above. While information on different languages appears at some point in many works, the specific role of language in the Yuan-Ming transition often remains vague.¹⁰ This role has never been analysed within a larger framework of early Ming ‘language policies,’ which include the following decisions: 1.) to found, in 1407, a *Bureau of Translators* (*Siyi guan* 四夷館); 2.) to continue the *Bureau of Interpreters* (*Huitong guan* 會同館), founded, in 1274, by the Yuan; 3.) to translate specific texts such as the *Tianwenshu* 天文書 [*Book on Heavenly Patterns*] (1383) out of specific languages; 4.) to produce bilingual glossaries such as the *Huayi yiyu* 華夷譯語 [*Sino-Barbarian Translations*] (1389); and 5.) to create multilingual texts—books, edicts, steles—and even material artefacts involving competence in non-Chinese languages.¹¹ This approach will enable us to take a fresh look both on the larger question of the openness or self-isolation of (Ming) Chinese society, and the specific question of the Mongol legacy. It is significant, because Yuan continuities on macro levels (administrative, institutional, political) can only be grasped through a systematic investigation of less visible micro levels, such as language.

My argument is threefold. First, the Yuan heritage was not just perceptible in institutions and newly absorbed territory but also in the linguistic landscape. Second, the early Ming, far from being “fiercely anti-Mongol,” attempted to imitate and surpass the Mongols. Language and translation—for practical as well as symbolic reasons—played an important part in this endeavour.¹² Third, and most importantly, the year 1368 marked neither a ‘revolutionary’ rupture nor a ‘business as usual’ continuation of Mongol legacies. Rather, the new dynasty attempted to strike a difficult balance, in which language and translation were instrumental in harmonising the needs for both continuity *and* a break. The Ming continued Yuan traditions such as the production of multilingual steles and edicts to symbolise and enforce their

¹⁰ An exception is Thomas T. Allsen (2001), “The Rasûlid Hexaglot in its Eurasian Cultural Context,” in *The King’s Dictionary: The Rasûlid Hexaglot. Fourteenth Century Vocabularies in Arabic, Persian, Turkic, Greek, Armenian, and Mongol*, ed. Peter B. Golden et al. (Leiden: Brill), 25-48, pointing to Mongol heritage in the field of language.

¹¹ These sources and their significance will be properly introduced under ‘Historiography’ and ‘Sources.’ My specific use of language policy as a framework will be explained under ‘Methods.’

¹² Quote from Standen (2013), “Foreign Conquerors of China,” in *Demystifying China: New Understandings of Chinese History*, ed. Naomi Standen (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield), 39.

universal imperial claim. At the same time, Chinese was (not *de jure*, but *de facto*) reinstituted as *the* imperial language, as opposed to *one imperial language among others* in Mongol times, which clearly reflects a break from previous practices. Thus, books inherited through the Mongol imperial library were translated by early Ming scholars into Chinese, as the new rulers no longer assumed widespread knowledge of Yuan imperial languages, such as Persian. Thus, while the distinction between ‘multilingual foreign’ dynasties (Yuan, Qing) and ‘monolingual Chinese’ dynasties (Ming), as developed from a Translation Studies viewpoint by Eva Hung, is not outright wrong, it does need considerable refinement, in order to better understand the nature of the early Ming and its place in the larger Yuan-Ming-Qing transition.¹³

‘Translation of empire’ has a double meaning in this thesis. First, ‘translation’ literally means language mediation: the Yuan’s textual legacies were translated from Mongolian and Persian into Chinese, while the new empire translated its claim to power into other languages by means of multilingual steles. Second, ‘translation of empire’ is a metaphor and alludes to the notion of *translatio imperii* in Western Eurasian history.¹⁴ This notion is similar to the dynastic cycle narrative of traditional Chinese historiography: fundamentally the idea that political power and knowledge were legitimately transferred from empire to empire throughout the ages (from Persians to Greeks to Romans; or from Chinese to Mongols and back to Chinese). In short, this thesis seeks to answer the following major research question: How did the Yuan cultural heritage shape early Ming empire building, and what was the role of linguistic difference in it? This question can be broken down into more specific questions. What sorts of legacies did the Yuan leave and what roles did they play in the Ming? How did the Ming harmonise the need for multilingualism with the programmatic preference for Chinese as imperial language? What tools, institutions, and professions did the Ming create to handle the translation of both inherited texts and new imperial orders, and what was their relation to previous Yuan models?

Finally, the period under investigation must be clarified. For the purpose of this thesis, I define ‘early Ming’ as the years 1368 to 1453. Most conclusions, thus, claim explanatory power for roughly the first eight decades of the Ming, although

¹³ Eva Hung (2005), “Translation in China: An Analytical Survey. First Century B.C.E. to Early Twentieth Century,” in *Asian Translation Traditions*, ed. Eva Hung & Judy Wakabayashi (Manchester: St. Jerome), 67-107; and Hung (2011), “Government Translators in Dynastic China,” in *Übersetzung–Translation–Traduction: An International Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, vol. III, ed. Harald Kittel et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter), 2173-2177.

¹⁴ Robert Stanton (2002), *The Culture of Translation in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer), 25-26.

certain conclusions will also be offered for the dynasty as a whole (1368-1644) and its place in the Yuan-Ming-Qing transition. Although a beginning is certainly easier to find than an end, even the choice of 1368 should be explained. After all, Dreyer famously chose 1352 as a beginning, thus including the Yuan-Ming transition wars of 1352 to 1368.¹⁵ Since it could be argued, however, that a ‘Ming’ did not exist before its proclamation as a new dynasty in 1368, I apply the traditional chronology in this case. The early Ming thus begins in January 1368, when Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328-1398), military leader of the strongest faction of Southern Chinese rebels against the Mongol Yuan, founded a new regime in the ancient capital Jinling 金陵, which he renamed Nanjing 南京 ‘Southern Capital.’ Zhu, whose rise from impoverished illiterate peasant to occupant of the imperial throne would indeed “seem unreal as fiction,” chose the name Ming 明 ‘Bright’ for the new dynasty and the era name Hongwu 洪武 ‘Vastly Martial’ for his rule (1368-1398).¹⁶ While until 1368 China had been part of a Mongol-based empire spanning much of Eurasia, the Ming founders’ strategy was based on ‘China proper.’

It is more difficult to limit the period under investigation at the other end. Clearly, however, there is some sort of change around 1450, related to the so-called Tumu incident. In 1449, Oirat Mongol troops of Esen Taishi 也先太師 (d. 1455) attacked the northern frontier and eventually captured the Zhengtong 正統 (r. 1435-1449) emperor at the margins of the battlefield, when he was encamped at Tumu Relay Station 土木驛. As Lane J. Harris argues, the Tumu incident marked the end of an era and “the victory of imperial anxiety over imperial longing about the borderlands.”¹⁷ Ming armies no longer marched into the lands beyond the frontiers, as they frequently did in the period under investigation. The favourable views of the Yuan held by early Ming rulers and scholars changed and a strong anti-Mongol bias developed.¹⁸ Wang Zhu 王洙, in his influential *Songshi zhi* 宋史質 [*Verified Song History*] (1546), just ‘skipped’ the Mongol era and placed the Ming line in direct

¹⁵ Dreyer (1982), *Early Ming China*, 2. Dreyer’s choice of 1352 has not been without critics, the harshest one being John D. Langlois (1985) in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105, 766-768.

¹⁶ Quote from Frederick Wade Mote (1988), “The Rise of the Ming Dynasty,” in Mote & Denis Twitchett (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. VIII: *The Ming Dynasty 1368-1644*, pt. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 44.

¹⁷ Lane J. Harris (2015), “Into the Frontiers: The Relay System and Ming Empire in the Borderlands, 1368-1449,” *Ming Studies* 72, 16.

¹⁸ For early Ming views of the Mongols, see Chapter One. On the anti-Mongol bias in post-Tumu historiography, see Chan Hok-lam 陳學霖 (1981), “Chinese Official Historiography at the Yüan Court: The Composition of the Liao, Chin, and Sung Histories,” in *China under Mongol Rule*, ed. John D. Langlois (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 96-97.

succession to the Song house by means of a fabricated imperial ancestry.¹⁹ Moreover, according to Leo Shin, Tumu also led to the Ming elite growing increasingly pessimistic about the idea of *jiaohua*, or the civilising process.²⁰ Indeed, in a famous 1487 work on governance, Qiu Jun 丘濬 (1418-1495) argued that ‘barbarians’ could not be assimilated and that the Ming and other polities should be kept separate, rejecting the idea to “make all under heaven one family” [天下為一家], a stance very much in contrast to the early Ming outlook, as we shall see.²¹

With the ramifications of the Tumu incident in mind, it is logical to define the end of the ‘early Ming’ around the middle of the fifteenth century. The choice of 1453 is based on the fact that this was the last year, to the best of my knowledge, that the Ming issued a bilingual edict (incidentally, it is also the year an Ottoman army conquered Constantinople).²² To be sure, neither Ming multilingualism nor invocations of the Mongol legacy simply ended in 1453. For example, in 1473, craftsmen in Beijing finished a Vajrāsana (Sanskrit for ‘Diamond Throne’) that uses Tibetan phrases to identify the Ming emperor as a *chakravartin*, a universal ruler in the Buddhist tradition. Its Himalayan style was first introduced from Tibet and Nepal in the Mongol era.²³ The Zhengde 正德 emperor (r. 1505-1521), to give another example, possessed at least elementary skills in the Tibetan and Mongolian languages.²⁴ Moreover, as Robinson has shown, in spite of the Tumu incident the Ming court continued many Mongol-influenced practices, such as martial spectacles and hunting.²⁵ However, early Ming rulers seem to have pursued ‘multilingual legitimacy strategies’ more systematically than their later successors. It is thus reasonable to limit the investigation to the years 1368-1453. Needless to say, as this thesis examines Mongol legacies, the era of Mongol rule itself will come into focus whenever it can illuminate the early Ming situation. That era includes the Mongol empire from its proclamation by Genghis Khan (1162-1227) in 1206, to its split-up

¹⁹ Benjamin A. Elman (2000), *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 55; Chan (1981), “Official Historiography,” 97-100.

²⁰ Leo Kwok-yueh Shin (2006), *The Making of the Chinese State: Ethnicity and Expansion on the Ming Borderlands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 162.

²¹ For a discussion of early Ming assimilation policies, see Chapter One. For Qiu Jun’s views, see Qiu (1999 [1487]), *Daxue yanyi bu* 大學衍義補 [Supplement to the Abundant Meanings of the Great Learning], ed. Fu Jizhou 夫濟周 & Qun Guanlin 群冠林 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe), juan 143-156, “Yu yidi 禦夷狄 [Controlling the Barbarians].”

²² Namely, the Mongolian-Chinese edict to the prince of Lar, which will be discussed in Chapter Two.

²³ Marsha Haufler (2014), “Beliefs: Miracles and Salvation,” in Craig Clunas & Jessica Harrison-Hall (eds.) (2014), *Ming: 50 Years That Changed China* (London: British Museum Press), 210.

²⁴ David M. Robinson (2008), “The Ming Court and the Legacy of the Yuan Mongols,” in Robinson, *Culture, Courtiers, and Competition*, 401-402.

²⁵ Robinson (2013), *Martial Spectacles*.

into *khanates* by the time of Kublai Khan's death (1294); the Yuan dynasty in China as one of these *khanates* (1279-1368); and particularly the years 1250-1350, in which the *pax mongolica* created a cosmopolitan world of trans-Eurasian circulation of people, goods, and ideas.²⁶

This section has clarified my original approach and contribution. In the following, I will discuss in more depth the debates in Ming studies and larger historiographical problems that have only been alluded to so far. By doing so, the approach of this thesis will be further refined. This introduction will then set out the array of sources I use and the methods and terminology I employ. Finally, it will provide a succinct chapter-for-chapter outline.

2. Ming historiography and its discontents

If history is not just what 'actually happened,' but also what later generations make of it, then the significance of the year 1368 in the history of China cannot be denied.²⁷ Until 1368 China had been part of a Mongol-led Eurasian empire, yet the Ming's strategy went back to 'China proper.' In 1644, the Manchus—like the Mongols of semi-nomadic origin—conquered Beijing, brought the Ming to an end, and established the Qing 清 dynasty (1644-1912), once again geographically transcending the Chinese heartlands. Thus, there exists the traditional perception of the Ming as the last 'Chinese' dynasty, sandwiched between two 'alien' regimes.

Consequently, 1368 is often seen as a crucial year, both in China itself and the West, with one strand of scholarship portraying the Ming as an exclusively Chinese regime, or a "Han Chinese dynasty" [漢族王朝].²⁸ Edward Farmer, founder of the journal *Ming Studies*, describes 1368 as the beginning of the "last period of Chinese self-rule prior to the twentieth century."²⁹ One study celebrates the Ming founding as

²⁶ Janet L. Abu-Lughod (1991 [1989]), *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

²⁷ Thus the much-quoted definition by one founder of the historical profession, Leopold von Ranke (1824), *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker: von 1494 bis 1535* (Leipzig: Reimer), 23: "wie es eigentlich gewesen".

²⁸ Chan Hok-lam (2001), *Mingdai renwu yu shiliao* 明代人物與史料 [*Personalities and Historical Sources of the Ming*] (Hong Kong: Zhongwen Daxue chubanshe), 287.

²⁹ Edward L. Farmer (1976), *Early Ming Government: The Evolution of Dual Capitals* (Cambridge, Mass: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University), 3. Basically the same assessment is found in Farmer (1995), *Zhu Yuanzhang and Early Ming Legislation: The Reordering of Chinese Society Following the Era of Mongol Rule* (Leiden: Brill), 18.

a break from Mongol rule and a “nationalist revival.”³⁰ Another work asserts that “the Ming was the last *purely Chinese* dynasty” and began “with the overthrow of the *hated Mongols*.”³¹ Farmer has argued further that the Ming founder conceived of China as a “homogeneous realm populated by Han Chinese,” or an “early modern recreation of traditional China,” and that the early Ming government “used its power to stamp out foreign influence.”³² From here, it is not far to the popular labels of “the antiforeign Ming Dynasty,” “the xenophobic Ming Dynasty,” “the isolationist Ming Dynasty,” and the assertion that the whole Ming period was pervaded “by anti-Mongolian Han nationalism.”³³ But was it? These labels point to five interrelated discussions, which I will address below. The first three work like a Russian Matryoshka doll, each discussion being contained in an even larger one. I begin with the topos of the ‘anti-Mongol’ Ming ‘expelling the Mongols.’ This is part of the larger narrative of a ‘closed’ Ming, which is, again, contained within the narrative of a ‘closed China’ in general. From this, further discussions will naturally arise: fourth, did the year 1368 constitute a ‘break’ with Yuan rule or did the Mongols leave substantial legacies? Fifth, is it apt to describe the founding in terms of ‘nationalism’? On the basis of these five points, I will further elaborate my approach.

Although the topoi that “the early Ming expelled the Mongols from China proper” or that the Ming founding led to a general “expulsion of the Mongols from China,” have been increasingly questioned in scholarship, they persist in surveys on long-term Chinese or global history—in this case, in the *magna opera* of Victor Lieberman and Frederick Mote, leading historians of Southeast Asia and China—and thus in the minds of larger audiences.³⁴ While it might be inevitable to generalise in works of such a broad outlook, generalisations can turn into ‘blind spots.’ Serruys was one of the first to notice this. While earlier scholars had either neglected the presence of the Mongols in Ming China or underestimated their number, Serruys’

³⁰ David Nicolle & Richard Hook (1990), *The Mongol Warlords: Genghis Khan, Kublai Khan, Hulegu, Tamerlane* (Poole: Firebird Books), 156.

³¹ Philip J. Adler & Randall Lee Pouwels (eds.) (2012), *World Civilizations*, vol. II: *Since 1500* (Boston: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning), 369. My emphasis.

³² Farmer (1995), *Early Ming Legislation*, 99, 17, and 104.

³³ Andrea Overfield (2001), *The Human Record: Sources of Global History*, vol. I (Boston: Houghton Mifflin), 284; Barry Milligan (1995), *Pleasures and Pains: Opium and the Orient in 19th Century British Culture* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia), 19; Pamela White (2005), *Exploration in the World of the Middle Ages: 500-1500* (New York: Facts on File), 104; Dawa Norbu (2001), *China's Tibet Policy* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press), 59-60.

³⁴ Victor B. Lieberman (2009), *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800-1830*, vol. II: *Mainland Mirrors: Europe, Japan, China, South Asia, and the Islands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 521; Frederick W. Mote (1999), *Imperial China, 900-1800* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press), 687.

first studies of the 1950s mark a watershed moment by revealing that the Ming recruited many of them for government or military service.³⁵ Although Serruys' sinicisation theory, which assumes that "the impressive achievements of Chinese culture (...) could not fail to attract more and more the better elements among the non-Chinese residents,"³⁶ is problematic (describing, after all, mainly the official early Ming view itself), his *Sino-Mongol Relations during the Ming* in three volumes remains the most authoritative study in any Western language.³⁷

The image of the Ming as "fiercely anti-Mongol" is part of a larger narrative of isolationism and xenophobia.³⁸ Although scholars working on the period usually acknowledge that the Ming interacted in various ways with the outside world, too often still we encounter an undifferentiated rhetoric of closure. In particular, this occurs in works that discuss issues 'around' the Ming. An example is Hans-Ulrich Vogel's re-evaluation of the question of whether the Venetian merchant Marco Polo (1254-1324) went to Mongol China himself or based his famous account on hearsay.³⁹ Discussing a manuscript of uncertain origin, Vogel attempts to rehabilitate its additional information (missing in the urtext) by stating that it could only have been contributed by the Venetian himself. Why so? Because shortly after Marco Polo went to China, the Ming shut itself off from the world:

it is...difficult to imagine how such specific and detailed information could have been transmitted within the environment of the rather closed-up China of the early 'Han-nationalistic' Ming period (1368-1644), compared with the more cosmopolitan situation during the Mongol Empire.⁴⁰

³⁵ Serruys (1957), "Remains of Mongol Customs; (1959), "Mongols Ennobled During the Early Ming," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 22, 209-260; (1961), "Foreigners in the Metropolitan Police During the 15th Century," *Oriens Extremus* 8, 59-83; (1966), "Landgrants to the Mongols in China: 1400-1460," *Monumenta Serica* 25, 394-405; and (1968), "The Mongols in China: 1400-1450," *Monumenta Serica* 27, 233-305.

³⁶ Serruys (1957), "Remains of Mongol Customs," 139-140.

³⁷ Serruys, *Sino-Mongol Relations During the Ming*, 3 vols. (Brussels: Institut belge des hautes études chinoises); vol. I (1959), *The Mongols in China During the Hung-wu [洪武] Period, 1368-1398*; vol. II (1967), *The Tribute System and Diplomatic Missions (1400-1600)*; and vol. III (1975), *Trade Relations: The Horse Fairs (1400-1600)*.

³⁸ The quote is from Standen (2013), "Foreign Conquerors," 39.

³⁹ The latter view is stated in Frances Wood (1996), *Did Marco Polo Go to China?* (Boulder: Westview Press).

⁴⁰ Hans-Ulrich Vogel (2013), *Marco Polo Was in China: New Evidence from Currencies, Salts and Revenues* (Leiden: Brill), 296.

This line of argument shows that the narrative of the closed and nationalistic Ming is still lurking in the shadows. It has, however, been increasingly criticised. By treating Yuan and Ming simply as one period, Timothy Brook has put ‘unprecedented’ early Ming events, such as the maritime expeditions of Zheng He 鄭和 (1371-1433), into the tradition of Yuan cosmopolitanism.⁴¹ An exhibition on the early Ming, held in 2014-2015 at the British Museum in London, presented countless artefacts that revealed an empire thoroughly connected with the outside world. Examples included a cook book sporting recipes such as “Foreign-Style Beans” [外國豆] and “Barbarian Beans” [胡豆]; religious objects with Chinese and non-Chinese (Tibetan, Sanskrit) inscriptions; regalia with gemstones imported from Sri Lanka; and a Quran produced in Beijing by a Chinese Muslim calligrapher and dated 1401—an artefact of one of the various religious traditions that were patronised by the imperial court.⁴² Such evidence hardly evokes a “rather closed-up China” (Vogel).

Ultimately, the ‘closed Ming’ paradigm can be seen as a late offspring of its ‘closed China’ ancestor, which arose in nineteenth century Europe. After idealised Enlightenment images of China (a realm of reason, ruled by Confucian philosophers) had not survived contact with reality, G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) placed China outside of world history: “Self-contained, it [China] reached this level of culture quite apart from foreign ties; its ties with other peoples are only recent, and they are of no significance for this empire.”⁴³ Similar views have popped up time and again, for example in Witold Rodziński’s (1918-1997) account of China as a ‘Walled Kingdom,’ which problematically assumes an “awesome continuity of China’s past and present.”⁴⁴ Nonetheless, the image of China as somehow detached from the rest of the planet has often been questioned. In the nineteenth century, Friedrich Hirth (1845-1927) had already explored geographical knowledge and foreign artistic influences in Chinese culture, and drew attention to the fact that the Ming established an institute to study languages.⁴⁵ In the 1930s, Otto Franke’s five-volume history

⁴¹ Timothy Brook (2010), *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), 93-94.

⁴² The impressions quoted above are from my own visit on 8 October 2014. Photographs of many exhibits can be seen in Clunas & Harrison-Hall (2014), *Ming*.

⁴³ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (author), Robert F. Brown et al. (translators) (2011 [1823]), *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History [Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte]*, vol. I: *Manuscripts of the Introduction and the Lectures of 1822-3* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 212-213.

⁴⁴ Witold Rodziński (1984), *The Walled Kingdom: A History of China from Antiquity to the Present* (New York: Free Press). The quote is from the blurb on the back cover.

⁴⁵ F. C. A. J. Hirth (1887), “The Chinese Oriental College [四夷館],” *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 12, 203-223; (1894), *Die Länder des Islâm nach chinesischen Quellen* (Leiden: Brill); (1896), *Über fremde Einflüsse in der chinesischen Kunst* (München: Hirth).

thoroughly revised Hegel's view of a never-changing China.⁴⁶ In the 1940s, Chen Yinke 陳寅恪 (1890-1969) demonstrated the many foreign borrowings of the most glorious 'Chinese' dynasty, the Tang 唐 (618-907), beginning with an imperial family of largely Turkish descent.⁴⁷ Chen's work was continued by Edward H. Schafer (1913-1991) and Mark E. Lewis, both of whom explored the Tang's interactions with new cultures and regions.⁴⁸ The point was also made for the Ming explicitly. The *doyen* of French sinology, Paul Pelliot (1878-1945), remarked that early Ming China "demeurait en réalité très ouverte aux choses du dehors," while Tilemann Grimm (1922-2002) concluded that Ming Chinese kept "a lively interest in foreign countries and the relations with them."⁴⁹ Grimm wrote, clearly reacting to the closure paradigm described above, that "it does not seem proper to assume that Imperial China was closed in within her own walls defying contact with the outside world."

While many earlier scholars took only a cursory interest in China's history in a global context, others pursued the question in a more systematic way. Morris Rossabi's edited volume *China Among Equals* (1983) disproved the idea that China lacked interest in foreign commerce and was ignorant of foreign lands, although some of its contributors still tended to overemphasise sinicisation and to gloss over foreign influence.⁵⁰ In particular, Rossabi challenged John K. Fairbank (1907-1991) and his view that China from the second century BC to the nineteenth century pursued an inflexible, monolithic foreign policy that treated *all* other polities *always* as subordinates.⁵¹ One of the most comprehensive critiques of the 'closure' paradigm is Valerie Hansen's *The Open Empire* (2000), depicting historical Chinese societies as

⁴⁶ Otto Franke (1930-1952), *Geschichte des Chinesischen Reiches: Eine Darstellung seiner Entstehung, seines Wesens und seiner Entwicklung bis zur neuesten Zeit*, 5 vols. (Berlin: De Gruyter).

⁴⁷ Chen Yinke 陳寅恪 (1963 [1940s]), *Sui Tang zhidu yuanyuan lie lun gao* 隋唐制度淵源略論稿 [*Draft Essays on the Origins of Sui and Tang Institutions*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju).

⁴⁸ Edward Hetzel Schafer (1963), *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of T'ang Exotics*, and (1967), *The Vermilion Bird: T'ang Images of the South* (both Berkeley: University of California Press); Mark Edward Lewis (2009), *China's Cosmopolitan Empire: The Tang Dynasty* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press).

⁴⁹ Paul Pelliot (1948, posthumous). "Le Sseu-yi-kouan et le Houei-t'ong-kouan," in Paul Pelliot, "Le Hōja et le Sayyid Husain de l'Histoire des Ming," *T'oung Pao* 38, 235; Tilemann Grimm (1961), "Thailand in the Light of Official Chinese Historiography: A Chapter in the 'History of the Ming Dynasty'," *Journal of the Siam Society* 49, 14-15.

⁵⁰ Morris Rossabi (ed.) (1983), *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th-14th Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press). An overemphasis on sinicisation is, in my view, Gari Ledyard (1983), "Yin and Yang in the China-Manchuria-Korea Triangle," in Rossabi, *China Among Equals*, 313-354.

⁵¹ John King Fairbank (ed.) (1968), *The Chinese World Order: Traditional Chinese Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

changing entities with borders that were always porous.⁵² Hansen's focus on overland connections, however, tends to obscure the maritime perspective, as Zheng Yangwen 鄭揚文 pointed out: empires in China continuously imported both foreign goods and foreign ideas, from religious creeds to addictive substances, through the seas.⁵³ In a similar vein, both Mote's *magnum opus* and Evelyn Rawski's latest monograph depict China not as isolated but as shaped by its relations to outsiders.⁵⁴

If there is any problem with some critiques of the 'closure' paradigm, it is the fact that attractive topics, such as the influence of European missionaries tend to be over-studied or over-emphasised. All in all, there is still much less focus on China's neighbours and what Chinese sources call *Xiyu* 西域, or the 'Western Regions.' In the early Ming, *Xiyu* referred to places west of the westernmost frontier passes in Gansu, including today's Xinjiang, Afghanistan, Persia, Central Eurasia, and powerful Silk Road cities such as Turfan, Samarkand, and Herat. The term could refer to places as far away as the Arabian peninsula or just to the Indian subcontinent, as in the Ming novel *Xiyu ji* 西遊記 [*Journey to the West*] (ca. 1592). The interpreter Aixue 愛薛 (1227-1308; 'Īsā [Jesus]), for example, who "knew the languages of all parts of the Western Regions" [通西域諸部語], hailed from Syria.⁵⁵ The important role ideas, knowledge, and people from the Western Regions played for China is not always elaborated, not even in studies with a global approach. For example, Joanna Waley-Cohen promises in the title of an intriguing book to trace 'Global Currents in Chinese History,' but focuses on interactions with Europe, while much less attention is paid to the extensive contact of China with its neighbours and the role played by the Western Regions.⁵⁶ Similarly, browsing through the colossal *Handbook of Christianity in China*—a relatively marginal topic from the viewpoint of Chinese-foreign exchange as a whole—reveals that for *the Western Regions in China* an equally substantial guidebook simply has not been written yet.⁵⁷ In contrast to this historiographical legacy, this thesis will focus on exactly these neighbours and *Xiyu* regions and the institutionalised study of their languages from the Ming founding onwards.

⁵² Valerie Hansen (2000), *The Open Empire: A History of China to 1600* (New York: Norton).

⁵³ Zheng Yangwen 鄭揚文 (2012), *China on the Sea: How the Maritime World Shaped Modern China* (Leiden: Brill).

⁵⁴ Mote (1999), *Imperial China*; Evelyn S. Rawski (2015), *Early Modern China and Northeast Asia: Cross-Border Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

⁵⁵ *Yuan History*, juan 134, 3249-3250

⁵⁶ Joanna Waley-Cohen (1999), *The Sextants of Beijing: Global Currents in Chinese History* (New York: W.W. Norton).

⁵⁷ Nicolas Standaert & R. G. Tiedemann (eds.) (2001-2010), *Handbook of Christianity in China*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill); vol. I: 635-1300, and vol. II: 1800 to the Present.

Returning to the Ming founding and the fourth problem in scholarship anticipated above: not only were the Mongols not expelled and the Ming not closed, the Yuan collapse and Ming foundation were in many ways much less of a rupture than previously assumed. Over the last fifty years, scholars who saw Mongol legacy in the Ming as pervasive were relatively few. In the spirit of Serruys' studies, Taylor showed that the Ming army, built around hereditary military households, was an adaption of Mongol practices but the debt was not acknowledged in the *Ming History*.⁵⁸ Around 1980, both Li Zefen's and Dreyer's work further softened the Yuan-Ming antagonism. While Dreyer was, at first, criticised for "overemphasising" the continuity of Yuan institutions, today his views appear much more acceptable.⁵⁹ This is due to new insights into the role of the Mongols in world history (exemplified in Thomas T. Allsen's work) as well as to the realisation that the dramatic changes brought about by them affected *all* Mongol successor states (David M. Robinson being the leading scholar in the reinterpretation of the Ming from this angle).

The Mongols' image in world history has morphed from barbarian destroyers into promoters of cross-cultural connections. Allsen's work played a central role in this paradigm shift.⁶⁰ While one should certainly not naively idealise Mongol rule—their empires were no voluntary confederations but built on violent conquests—it is clear that they did trigger an unprecedented cultural exchange across Eurasia, spanning such diverse fields as astronomy, medicine, religion, and cuisine.⁶¹ As Allsen has shown, this exchange was not some 'accidental' by-product but initiated by the Mongols themselves. Muslim astronomers went to China in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, not because they themselves or their counterparts were enthusiastic to exchange scientific insights, but because their Mongol patrons wanted second opinions. Studies by Herbert Franke (1914-2011), the late Igor de Rachewiltz (1929-2016), Morris Rossabi, Zhang Chengzhi 張承志, and Michael C. Brose have illustrated Mongol-era population movements by focusing on groups such as

⁵⁸ Taylor (1963), "Social Origins of the Ming"; and (1969), "Yuan Origins."

⁵⁹ Li (1979), *Yuanshi xinjiang*; Dreyer (1982), *Early Ming China*, esp. 76-87. For a critique of 'overemphasis' on Mongol legacy, see Pei Huang's (1984) review of Dreyer (1982) in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 44, 161-163.

⁶⁰ Allsen's seminal study of 2001, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), focused on exchange between Yuan China and Ilkhanid Iran. An earlier case study is (1997), *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

⁶¹ For the new levels of geographical knowledge transmission, see Hyunhee Park (2012), *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds: Cross-Cultural Exchange in Pre-Modern Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Muslims, Uyghurs, Tibetans, and Turks.⁶² To use Michal Biran and Reuven Amitai's catchy title, we can see 'nomads as agents of cultural change.'⁶³ John D. Langlois (1942-2010) further showed that the Yuan was more pluralistic than any other dynasty in China *and* contributed to the preservation of Chinese cultural heritage.⁶⁴ Parallel to this development, a 2002 art exhibition did much to improve the Mongols' image for wider audiences.⁶⁵ In fact, art historians had acknowledged the Mongol era as one of unique flourishing since at least 1931.⁶⁶ In a way, historians just needed some time to catch up.

This new image of the Mongols as conquerors who became sophisticated globalisers and patrons of art and culture naturally influenced the assessment of the successor states of their empire. Timothy May, focusing on the 'Genghis exchange' in fields such as trade, religion, and migration, and hand in hand with Christopher Atwood's encyclopaedic unravelling of the Mongol world, put to rest the cliché that the Mongols vanished as quickly as they emerged.⁶⁷ For the Ming in particular, Robinson's work of the last decade has shown the existence of a Yuan legacy on many more levels than Serruys, Taylor or Dreyer had imagined. A breakthrough came with his edited volume *The Ming Court* (2008), which situated the court in a global context and portrayed it as international in composition and interests, owing much to the cosmopolitanism of its Yuan predecessor.⁶⁸ Mongol legacy is also a leitmotif in Robinson's latest monograph, demonstrating that in the first century of Ming rule literati openly traced the origin of martial spectacles at the court back to precedents

⁶² Herbert Franke (1981), "Tibetans in Yüan China," in Langlois, *China Under Mongol Rule*, 296-328; Igor de Rachewiltz (1983), "A Preliminary Investigation of Turco-Mongol Relations in the 13th and 14th Centuries," in Rossabi, *China Among Equals*, 281-310; Morris Rossabi (1981), "The Muslims in the Early Yüan Dynasty," in Langlois, *China under Mongol Rule*, 257-295; Zhang Chengzhi 張承志 (1983), "Yuandai Weiwuermen de neibu zhuangkuang" 元代畏兀兒人的內部狀況 [Internal Conditions of the Uyghurs in the Yuan], *Minzu yanjiu* 民族研究 5, 13-23; Michael C. Brose (2007), *Subjects and Masters: Uyghurs in the Mongol Empire* (Bellingham, Washington: Center for East Asian Studies).

⁶³ Michal Biran & Reuven Amitai (eds.) (2014), *Nomads as Agents of Cultural Change: The Mongols and Their Eurasian Predecessors* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press).

⁶⁴ Langlois (1981), *China under Mongol Rule*.

⁶⁵ Linda Komaroff & Stefano Carboni (eds.) (2002), *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256-1353* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art). See also the follow-up volume, complementing the exhibition: Linda Komaroff (2006) (ed.), *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan* (Leiden: Brill).

⁶⁶ In 1931, an exhibition on Persian art under the Mongols was held in London. Burlington House (ed.) (1931), *Persian Art: An Illustrated Souvenir of the Exhibition of Persian Art at Burlington House, London* (London: Hudson & Kearns).

⁶⁷ Timothy Michael May (2012), *The Mongol Conquests in World History* (London: Reaktion Books), 109-256; Christopher Pratt Atwood (2004), *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire* (New York: Facts on File).

⁶⁸ Robinson (2008), *Culture, Courtiers, and Competition*.

set by the Mongols or the Jurchens, the ‘ancestors’ of the Manchus.⁶⁹ In his emphasis on cosmopolitanism, military culture, and the place of the Ming in a larger Eurasian context, Robinson’s work is the much needed foundation stone of a ‘New Ming History,’ supplementing the thriving New Qing History of the last two decades, led by scholars such as Rawski, Pamela Kyle Crossley, Mark Elliott, and Peter Perdue, who stress the multi-ethnic, Central Eurasian, and martial aspects of the Qing polity.⁷⁰ As this thesis will elaborate, multilingualism is another aspect that unites Ming and Qing more than previously imagined—and links both back to the Yuan.

The achievements of both the New Qing History and the fledgling ‘New Ming History,’ exemplified in Robinson’s work, are significant to critically question nationalist historiographies or approaches that apply modern national categories all too easily onto past societies. We arrive now at the fifth problem in scholarship, as anticipated, the tradition to see in the regime change of 1368 a “nationalist revival.”⁷¹ Vogel speaks of the “Han-nationalistic” Ming, Farmer of a “proto-nationalist reaction of Han Chinese to the experience of Mongol conquest.”⁷² These labels are basically the late offspring of Han nationalism, as it emerged in nineteenth century China.⁷³ However, such language risks to anachronistically blur historical and modern thought. A close reading of Serruys already lets one doubt the benefit of applying ‘national’ categories. There was no lack of energetic effort on the part of Mongols *and Chinese alike* to save the old regime. Yuan generals were of Chinese and of Mongol origin.⁷⁴ Some Chinese withdrew with the Mongols and continued to serve them in Mongolia, while some inhabitants of China proper hoped for a possible return of the Yuan.⁷⁵ The early Ming employed Mongols and other ‘non-Chinese’ in substantial numbers, as we shall see.

⁶⁹ Robinson (2013), *Martial Spectacles*.

⁷⁰ One of the ‘founding documents’ of the New Qing History is Evelyn S. Rawski (1996), “Presidential Address: Reenvisioning the Qing: The Significance of the Qing Period in Chinese History”, *Journal of Asian Studies* 55, 829-850. Other major works include Pamela Kyle Crossley (1999), *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press); Mark Elliott (2001), *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press); and Peter C. Perdue (2005), *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press).

⁷¹ Nicolle & Hook (1990), *Mongol Warlords*, 156.

⁷² Vogel (2013), *Marco Polo Was in China*, 296; Edward L. Farmer (2016), “Interviews with Ming Scholars: Ted Farmer,” *Ming Studies* 73, 78. While Vogel puts the term ‘Han-nationalistic’ into quotation marks, it might be asked if that makes it any more helpful for an understanding of the Ming.

⁷³ On being ‘Chinese’ as national or ethnic identity, see Rana Mitter (2013), “Nationalism in East Asia, 1839-1945,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, ed. John Breuilly (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 287-307.

⁷⁴ See Serruys (1959), *Sino-Mongol Relations* I, 40 et seq., for examples.

⁷⁵ Serruys (1959), *Sino-Mongol Relations* I, 44.

Chinese scholars had supported the Yuan for a multitude of reasons, including the desire to reunify North and South under a single ruling house.⁷⁶ However, since historiography became mostly nationalist in the twentieth century, such complexities were conveniently forgotten by some. The historian Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895-1990) was once puzzled by the fact that most figures of the late Yuan ‘Chinese’ elite, unlike Qian himself, did not resent the Mongol conquerors and their dynasty on ethnic or nationalist grounds, and did not rejoice in unison at the coming of the ‘Chinese’ Ming.⁷⁷ “In the hearts of the scholar-officials of the time” [當時士大夫心中], Qian noted, the “distinction between barbarians and civilised” [夷夏之辨] was apparently not very strong.⁷⁸ True was the reverse: while scholar-officials staunchly supported that distinction, the Mongols belonged for them to the civilised. Sun Kekuan 孫克寬 (1905-1993), at the height of the Cultural Revolution (1968), hailed the Ming founding wars as ‘patriotic’ and argued that a proto-nationalist Confucianism shielded the Chinese heritage to “preserve race and culture” [保種存文].⁷⁹ Similar views appear in Rodziński who called Mongol China “one of the most oppressive regimes ever.”⁸⁰ In a new popular treatment, the ‘bad guys’ (foreign Yuan) versus ‘good guys’ (native Ming) story triumphs again: under the “abusive rule of the foreign Mongolian rulers (...), the Chinese people lived in great suffering” until the Ming ushered in “peace and prosperity.”⁸¹ In contrast, Li Zefen challenged views of the Yuan as uniquely oppressive, arguing that justice was more lenient than in Song 宋 (960-1279) or Ming times, “literary inquisitions” [文字獄] did not take place, and religious freedom was greater than at any later point.⁸² Against nationalist distortions, John Dardess further showed that Yuan-era Confucianism was not about defending ‘Han-Chinese culture’ but rather universal principles of moral and political life.⁸³

⁷⁶ Langlois (1981), “Introduction,” 10-12.

⁷⁷ Qian Mu 錢穆 (1964), “Du Mingchu kaiguo zhu chen shiwenji 讀明初開國諸臣詩文集 [Reading the Collected Works of Various State-Founding Officials in the Early Ming],” *Xinya xuebao* 新亞學報 6, 245-326.

⁷⁸ Qian Mu, quoted after Xu Hong 徐泓 (2011), *Ershi shiji Zhongguo de Mingshi yanjiu* 二十世紀中國的明史研究 [*Ming History Research in Twentieth Century China*] (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan Daxue chubun zhongxin), 52.

⁷⁹ Sun Kekuan 孫克寬 (1968), *Yuandai Han wenhua zhi huodong* 元代漢文化之活動 [*Han-Chinese Cultural Activities in Yuan Times*] (Taipei: Zhonghua shuju); and (1975), *Yuandai Jinhua xueshu* 元代金華學述 [*Jinhua Scholarship in the Yuan*] (Taichung: Zhongyang shuju).

⁸⁰ Rodziński (1984), *The Walled Kingdom*, 138.

⁸¹ Hung Hing Ming (2016), *From the Mongols to the Ming Dynasty: How a Begging Monk Became Emperor of China, Zhu Yuan Zhang* (New York: Aurora), 1-2.

⁸² Li (1979), *Yuanshi xinjiang*. For Yuan criminal justice, a similar point was made by Morris Rossabi (2009 [1988]), *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times* (Berkeley), 130.

⁸³ John Wolfe Dardess (1973), *Conquerors and Confucians: Aspects of Political Change in Late Yüan China* (New York: Columbia University Press), 33-34.

Crucial in the Yuan-Ming transition was loyalty (*zhong* 忠), not ethnicity or membership in a ‘nation.’ Loyalty, if applied to social bonds beyond the family unit, meant loyalty to a ruling house, a dynasty, or a military leader, but not to a ‘nation’ imagined through widespread literacy and print capitalism.⁸⁴ Rebels against Yuan rule are hard to fit into Eric Hobsbawm’s (1917-2012) succinct definition of nationalism as “the readiness of people to identify themselves emotionally with ‘their’ ‘nation’ and to be politically mobilised as Czechs, Germans, Italians or whatever.”⁸⁵ Zhu Yuanzhang indeed did not mobilise people as ‘the Chinese’ but as various discontented Yuan dynasty subjects who spoke very different speech varieties of ‘Chinese’ plus other languages; his main complaint against Mongol rule concerned illicit bureaucratic practices, not foreign origins; and the main ideological drive behind the rebellion was not ‘nationalist’ in any sense but an apocalyptic religious vision based on Buddhist and Manichaean elements.⁸⁶ For that reason, early Ming sources speak of captured “troops of the former Yuan” [故元軍], but rarely mention if they were Mongols, Chinese, or others.⁸⁷ The Ming imagined itself—cases of anti-Other rhetoric notwithstanding—as the *Zhongguo* 中國 ‘Central Realm’ of civilisation. Consequently, Ming subjects were, collectively, not known as anything that could be reasonably translated into ‘Chinese’ but as *Mingren* 明人 ‘Ming dynasty people,’ that is, the diverse people who lived within the borders of the empire and were expected to be loyal to it. ‘Alien’ regimes used the same terminology, so that the *Mingren* succeeded the *Yuanren* 元人 ‘Yuan dynasty people’ and preceded the *Qingren* 清人 ‘Qing dynasty people.’⁸⁸ The Ming resembles, in this regard, the contemporaneous Ottoman empire (1299/1453-1923), which was neither exclusively Islamic nor exclusively Turkish (as it is sometimes falsely imagined today): it demanded from its diverse inhabitants allegiance to the person of the sultan, rather than to some ethnic, religious, or ‘national’ identity.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Benedict Anderson (2006), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. Revised Edition* (London: Verso).

⁸⁵ Eric Hobsbawm (1997), *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914* (London: Abacus), 143.

⁸⁶ John D. Langlois (1981), “Introduction,” in Langlois, *China Under Mongol Rule*, 16; Barend J. ter Haar (1999), *The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press).

⁸⁷ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Hongwu, *juan* 152, 2390.

⁸⁸ Chang Chun-shu (2007), *The Rise of the Chinese Empire: Nation, State, and Imperialism in Early China, ca. 1600 B.C.-A.D.* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), 255.

⁸⁹ Colin Imber (2002), *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power* (London: Palgrave Macmillan), esp. 3-4, 170.

Instead of viewing Ming history from the perspective of modern nation states, historians of China would be well advised to follow Peter Burke's example by paying more attention to languages.⁹⁰ One methodological advantage is that languages are often much more concrete and 'tangible' than vague historical-geographical areas ('China,' 'Persia') or nation states projected into the past. For example, reading that under the Abbasid dynasty (750-1258), "a large number of books from Persia, India and China were translated into Arabic,"⁹¹ one might wish for more precision. Given the linguistic pluralism of the Indian subcontinent throughout history, 'books from India' does not tell us anything about source languages and associated literary traditions. Even 'books from China' were historically not always written in Chinese. Early Ming printing in non-Chinese languages will be discussed in due course. To be sure, speaking of languages such as 'Chinese,' 'Persian,' and 'Mongolian' in the early Ming, we must keep in mind that they are not monolithic entities. There is neither *one* Mongolian language nor *one* Chinese language, neither today nor in the Ming.⁹² There are and were different, often mutually unintelligible Han Chinese speech varieties called 'Chinese,' plus a *koine* dialect (*guanhua* 官話, 'official language,' or Nanyin 南音 'Southern speech,' which was in the early Ming a Nanjing dialect), plus finally the standardised written form of these vernaculars, known as literary Chinese.⁹³ 'Dialects' such as *guanhua*, Wu 吳, Yue 粵 'Cantonese,' Xiang 湘, and Hakka 客家 would likely be treated as different 'languages' in a European context. As John DeFrancis remarked, the concept of a singular Chinese language was and is an abstraction that contains a "host of mutually unintelligible forms of speech."⁹⁴

Looking at the Yuan-Ming transition through the optic of language and translation activities, one focus will be on the 1407-established *Siyi guan* 四夷館 (*Bureau of Translators*, literally *Bureau for the Barbarians of the Four Cardinal*

⁹⁰ Peter Burke (2004), *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Burke & Roy Porter (eds.) (1987), *The Social History of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

⁹¹ Abdur Rahman (2002), *India's Interaction with China, Central and West Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 30.

⁹² Juha Janhunen (2003), *The Mongolic Languages* (London: Routledge).

⁹³ Weldon South Coblin (1997), "Notes on the Sound System of Late Ming *guanhua*," *Monumenta Serica* 45 (1997), 261-307. Richard VanNess Simmons recently showed how early Ming *guanhua* was characterised by five instead of four tones, based on Lan Mao's 蘭茂 (1397-1476) rime dictionary *Yunlüe yitong* 韻畧易通 (1442). As the Ming founder's mother tongue and that of his original core of soldiers, it spread widely after the conquest, both through its prestige at court and through military settlements. Simmons (2016), "Spoken Mandarin in the Ming," talk given at the panel 'Language in the Ming,' held by the *Society for Ming Studies*, 1 April 2016, Sheraton Seattle Hotel.

⁹⁴ John DeFrancis (1984), *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press), 39

Directions), on which the Chinese-language historiography has been continually growing in the past decades. Chinese scholarship often deals with particular language departments and their achievements, bilingual glossaries, or *yiyu* 譯語 (objects of analysis I will introduce under ‘Sources’ and ‘Methods’). Wuyungaowa 烏雲高娃, for example, studied the Mongolian and Jurchen departments.⁹⁵ Others focused on administrative and training structures of the *Bureau*, such as Wang Xiong 王雄 and Zhang Wende 張文德.⁹⁶ While some recent articles have developed a triumphant narrative, in which the *Bureau* is celebrated as the “first translator’s school in Chinese history” [中國歷史上最早的翻譯學校] or the “first foreign-language school of Our Nation” [我國最早的一所外文學校], the historical context of language learning is not always analysed in sufficient depth.⁹⁷ To state, for example, that one function of the *Bureau* was to “promote unity with the ethnic minorities within the borders” [促進與境內少數民族的團結] is problematic for two reasons.⁹⁸ First, this is ambiguous for Yunnan: its languages were studied in the *Bureau* but the region had been invaded by the Ming only shortly before its founding. Second, the conquered populations are retrospectively turned into ‘minorities’ of a modern nation state that has existed for not much longer than a century. Similarly, recent works treat the Tanguts, who created Tangut-Chinese bilingual glossaries, as China’s *shaoshu minzu* 少數民族 ‘ethnic minorities,’ even though the Tangut empire (1038-1227), was a rival of the Song dynasty and not a part of China in any sense.⁹⁹ Avoiding such anachronisms, the historical-cultural context of the *Bureau* foundation must be analysed in more depth.

⁹⁵ Wuyungaowa 烏雲高娃 (2002), “Ming *Siyi guan* ‘Dada guan’ yanjiu 明四夷館《韃靼館》研究 [Research on the Mongolian Department of the *Bureau of Translators*],” *Zhongyang Minzu Daxue xuebao* 中央民族大學學報 4, 63-69; and (2005), “Ming *Siyi guan* ‘Nüzhen guan’ he Chaoxian *Sayeok weon* ‘Nüzhen yuxue’ 明四夷館《女真館》和朝鮮司譯院《女真語學》 [The Jurchen Department of the Ming *Bureau of Translators* and the ‘Jurchen linguistics’ of the *Sayeok weon* 司譯院 (*Court for Translation Administration*)],” *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* 中國史研究 1, 127-133.

⁹⁶ Wang Xiong 王雄 (1987), “Mingchao de *Siyi guan* ji qi dui yizisheng de peiyang 明朝的四夷館及其對譯字生的培養 [The *Siyi guan* of the Ming and its Training of Student Translators],” *Minzu yanjiu* 民族研究 2, 64-71; Zhang Wende 張文德 (2000), “Wang Zongzai yi qi *Siyi guan* kao 王宗載及其四夷館考 [Wang Zongzai and his Inspection of the *Bureau of Translators*],” *Zhongguo bianjiang shidi yanjiu* 中國邊疆史地研究 3, 91-102.

⁹⁷ Zhang Xiuyan 張秀燕 (2008), “Zhongguo lishi shang zui zao de fanyi xuexiao: Mingchao *Siyi guan* 中國歷史上最早的翻譯學校：明朝四夷館 [The First Translator’s School in Chinese History: The *Siyi guan*],” *Neimenggu Nongye daxue xuebao* 內蒙古農業大學學報 6, 324-325; Ge Zhilun 葛治倫 (1987), “Woguo zuizao de yi suo waiwen xuexiao: Mingdai de *Siyi guan* 我國最早的一所外文學校：明代的四夷館 [The First Foreign-Language School of Our Nation: The *Siyi guan* of the Ming Dynasty],” *Waiyu jiaoxue yu yanjiu* 外語教學與研究 2, 52-53.

⁹⁸ Ge (1987), “Mingdai de *Siyi guan*,” 53.

⁹⁹ See Yong Heming 雍和明 & Peng Jing 彭晶 (2008), *Chinese Lexicography: A History from 1046 BC to AD 1911* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), chapter 22 “Ethnic minority languages and their bilingual dictionaries,” 376-383. Exactly the same approach prevails in Chen Fukang 陳福康 (2009), *Zhongguo yixue shi* 中國譯學史 [*A History of Translational Science in China*] (Shanghai).

While this thesis will focus on the *Bureau of Translators* as a new Ming organ, attention will also be paid to the *Bureau of Interpreters* (*Huitong guan* 會同館), which was founded in 1274 and is a Mongol legacy.¹⁰⁰ The language mediation of the multi-functional *Huitong guan* (guest house, postal station, marketplace), literally ‘Hall for Gatherings’ and only customarily called *Bureau of Interpreters* in this thesis, is often overshadowed by other aspects. A recent detailed examination of the early Ming relay system, for example, mentions only its guest house function and language and translation never come into view.¹⁰¹ Both bureaus produced bilingual glossaries, on which a number of fine studies have been written. Marian Lewicki (1908-1955), Erich Haenisch (1880-1966), and Antoine Mostaert (1881-1971) analysed the seminal *Sino-Barbarian Translations* (1389).¹⁰² Friedrich Müller (1863-1930) examined Tai-Kadai material, Pierre Lefèvre-Pontalis (1864-1938) analysed a Thai vocabulary, Julius Klaproth (1783-1835) and Louis Ligeti (1902-1987) worked on Uyghur glossaries, and Roy Miller (1924-2014) investigated Burmese material.¹⁰³ Liu Yingsheng 劉迎勝 recently studied two Persian vocabularies in great detail.¹⁰⁴ Ming-era ‘Jurchen studies’ have been of particular interest, due to the role the Jurchens and their ‘proto-Manchu’ language played in Chinese history: they are the ancestors of the Manchus who would eventually overthrow the Ming and create the Qing.¹⁰⁵ Less researched than linguistic

¹⁰⁰ For the Ming *Huitong guan* (*Bureau of Interpreters*), see Wang Jianfeng 王建峰 (2006). “Mingdai *Huitong guan* zhineng kaoshu 明代會同館職能考述 [A Study on the Functions of the *Huitong guan* in the Ming dynasty],” *Lanzhou daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 蘭州大學學報 (社會科學版) 5, 105-111. On the Yuan predecessor, see Wang Jing 王靜 (2002), “Yuanchao *Huitong guan* lunkao 元朝會同館論考 [A Discussion of the *Huitong guan* of the Yuan Dynasty],” *Xibei Daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 西北大學學報 (哲學社會科學版) 3, 131-134.

¹⁰¹ Harris (2015), “Into the Frontiers,” 6.

¹⁰² Marian Lewicki (1949/1959), *La langue mongole des transcriptions chinoises du XIVe siècle*, 2 vols. (Wrocław: Wrocławskiego Towarzystwa Naukowe). Antoine Mostaert (1977/1995), *Le matériel Mongol du Houa I I lu de Houng-ou (1389)*, 2 vols. (Brussels: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises). Erich Haenisch (1952), *Sino-mongolische Dokumente vom Ende des 14. Jahrhunderts*; and (1957), *Sinomongolische Glossare: Das Hua-I ih-yü* (both Berlin: Akademie-Verlag).

¹⁰³ Friedrich Wilhelm Karl Müller (1892), “Vocabularien der Pa-Yi- und Pah-Poh-Sprachen, aus dem ‘hua-i-yi-yü’ [華夷譯語] veröffentlicht,” *T’oung Pao* 3, 1-38; and (1894), “Ein Brief in Pa-yi-Schrift,” *T’oung Pao* 5, 329-333. Pierre Lefèvre-Pontalis (1892), “Étude sur quelques alphabets et vocabulaires Thaïs,” *T’oung Pao* 3, 39-64. Louis Ligeti (1966), “Un vocabulaire sino-ouïgour des Ming: le *Kao-Tch’ang-Kouan yi-chou* [高昌館譯書] du *Bureau des traducteurs*,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 19, 117-199 & 257-316. Julius Heinrich Klaproth (1895 [1820]), *Abhandlung über die Sprache und Schrift der Uiguren* (Hamburg: Buske). Roy Andrew Miller (1954), “The Sino-Burmese Vocabulary of the *I-shih chi-yü*,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 17, 370-393.

¹⁰⁴ Liu Yingsheng 劉迎勝 (2008), *‘Huihui guan zazi’ yu ‘Huihui guan yiyu’ yanjiu* 《回回館雜字》與《回回館譯語》研究 [A Study on Two Sino-Persian Glossaries] (Beijing).

¹⁰⁵ Wilhelm Grube (1896), *Die Sprache und Schrift der Jučen* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz), is the seminal study. Recent works include Dao’erji 道爾吉 & Hexige 和希格 (1983). *Nüzhen yiyu yanjiu* 女真譯語研究 [Research on the Jurchen Yiyu-Glossaries] (Hohhot); and Daniel Kane (1989), *The Sino-Jurchen Vocabulary of the Bureau of Interpreters* (Bloomington: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies).

dimensions but crucial to my approach is the historical context of these glossaries, as I will elaborate under ‘Methods.’

In European scholarship, the *Bureau of Translators* was first mentioned by the Jesuit Jean Amiot (1718-1793). He errs in saying that it was founded by the ‘current’ dynasty, the Qing, at the court of which he was employed as a translator himself; Abel Rémusat (1788-1832) clarified the Ming provenance of the *Bureau*.¹⁰⁶ Norman Wild (1918-1996) wrote a significant paper in 1945, in which he paraphrased parts of the *Siyi guan ze* 四譯館則 [*Regulations for the Bureau of Translators*] (1630), though without embedding them in a larger context.¹⁰⁷ The most authoritative Western-language study on the two Ming translation bureaus remains Pelliot’s work, focusing on their entangled institutional histories.¹⁰⁸ Much later work is indebted to it, for example Crossley’s contribution, which focuses on the changing roles of the two *Bureaus* in the Ming-Qing transition period.¹⁰⁹ As with other studies by Pelliot, this is a survey of an awe-inspiring range of sources, yet more a philological commentary than an argument built on research questions. “Distrustful of any theory claiming to explain how the world was working,”¹¹⁰ Pelliot never tried to contextualise the results of his *Bureau* analysis within his equally impressive work on the Mongol era, the Arab and Persian seafarers in the Chinese city of Quanzhou, and the naval expeditions of Zheng He (the first 1405-1407, the last 1431-1433), topics that have strong links to translation activities.¹¹¹

Zheng He’s expeditions, in particular, must have created a growing demand for interpreters and translators, attested by the Galle Trilingual Stele, left behind by the fleet. Zheng He will thus mediate between two areas of research that seldom

¹⁰⁶ J. J. M. Amiot (1789), *Mémoires concernant les Chinois*, vol. XIV: *Introduction à la connaissance des peuples qui ont été ou qui sont actuellement tributaires de la Chine* (Paris: Chez Nyon); Jean-Pierre Abel Rémusat (1826), “De l’étude des langues étrangères chez les Chinois,” in *Mélanges Asiatiques*, vol. II, ed. Jean-Pierre Abel Rémusat (Paris: Librairie Orientale), 242-265.

¹⁰⁷ Norman Wild (1945), “Materials for the Study of the *Ssu I Kuan* (Bureau of Translators) [四夷館],” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 9, 617-640.

¹⁰⁸ Pelliot (1948), “Sseu-yi-kouan.”

¹⁰⁹ Pamela Kyle Crossley (1991), “Structure and Symbol in the Role of the Ming-Qing Foreign Translation Bureaus (*siyi guan*),” *Central and Inner Asian Studies* 5, 38-70.

¹¹⁰ Denis Sinor (1999), “Remembering Paul Pelliot,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 119, 471.

¹¹¹ Pelliot (1912), “Review of *Chau Ju-Kua* [趙汝适], *His Work on the Chinese and Arab Trade*, by Friedrich Hirth and W. W. Rockhill,” *T’oung Pao* 13, 446-481; (1922-1931), “Les Mongols et la Papauté: Documents nouveaux édités, traduits et commentés par M. Paul Pelliot,” *Revue de l’Orient chrétien* 3 (1922/1923), 3-30; 4 (1924), 225-335; and 8 (1931), 3-84; (1933), “Les grand voyages maritimes chinois au début du 15e siècle,” *T’oung Pao* 30, 237-452; (1935), “Notes additionnelles sur Tcheng Houo [Zheng He] et sur ses voyages,” *T’oung Pao* 31, 274-314; and (1936), “Encore à propos des voyages de Tcheng Houo,” *T’oung Pao* 32, 210-222.

interact: language study in China and Chinese ‘colonialism.’ Geoff Wade recently provoked much resistance with his opinion that the Ming expeditions were “maritime proto-colonialism.”¹¹² He was criticised extensively, for example, by Tan Ta Sen. While Tan rightly asserts that Zheng He, unlike later the Portuguese, did not establish colonies or factories, this approach risks missing the point: the whole Chinese imperial project is (as most imperial projects) *also* a colonial one.¹¹³ While we can speak of ‘polity expansion’ instead, both words point to one process: the expansion of a territorial power into another, inhabited territory by military and cultural means.¹¹⁴ An unsuccessful case of such colonialism was the Ming’s attempt to conquer Đại Việt (North Vietnam); the successful case, Yunnan, is a focus of Chapter Two. The attack on Đại Việt (1406) occurred in the middle of Zheng He’s first mission (1405-1407), and a year before the *Bureau of Translators* was founded (1407), yet Zheng He and Vietnam are almost never discussed together. One exception is Dreyer, who, like Wade, emphasised that the fleet was crewed by regular military personnel and used military force on three occasions.¹¹⁵ Roderich Ptak, specialist in the history of Chinese trade, reacted with a broadside attack, insisting that Zheng He “can be associated with harmony and peace, with tolerance and respect for others,” uncritically repeating the official People’s Republic of China (PRC) view to the letter.¹¹⁶ Dreyer, again, at home with military matters, neglects the economic side: his claim that the Ming “imported spices but not much else,” is insupportable.¹¹⁷ Instead, various goods were brought in, partly processed through the *Bureau of Interpreters*.

Scholars have developed a variety of ideas to understand how and why the Ming empire expanded into its borderlands. Herold Jacob Wiens represents the assimilation approach, a ‘Frontier Thesis’ applied to China, in which indigenous people appear simply overwhelmed by the advanced technology and Confucian civilisation brought by land-hungry Chinese immigrants.¹¹⁸ This is the classic

¹¹² Geoff Wade (2005), “The Zheng He Voyages: A Reassessment,” *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 78, 44.

¹¹³ Tan Ta Sen (2005), “Did Zheng He Set Out to Colonize Southeast Asia?” in *Admiral Zheng He and Southeast Asia*, ed. Leo Suryadinata (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies), 42-57.

¹¹⁴ Geoff Wade (ed.) (2015), *Asian Expansions: The Historical Experiences of Polity Expansion in Asia* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge).

¹¹⁵ Edward Leslie Dreyer (2006), *Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty 1405-1433* (New York: Pearson Longman).

¹¹⁶ Roderich Ptak (2007), review of Dreyer (2006), *Zheng He*, in *Archipel* 74, 258.

¹¹⁷ Dreyer (2006), *Zheng He*, 9. For a detailed discussion, see Chapter Three.

¹¹⁸ Herold Jacob Wiens (1954), *China’s March toward the Tropics* (Hamden, CT: Shoe String Press). For one probable inspiration behind Wiens, see Frederick Jackson Turner (1884), “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” *Annual Report of the American Historical Association*, 119-224.

sinicisation theory, another theme throughout the thesis, which will be discussed from a language perspective. Wiens was challenged by John Herman who demonstrated that the ‘incorporation’ of Guizhou was violent.¹¹⁹ While many, such as Perdue and Hostetler, focused on the Qing as the outstanding example of imperial expansion, Herman goes back to the Ming.¹²⁰ His provocative argument is that the Ming, not the Qing, pioneered colonial domination through military conquest and economic exploitation. Precise language is crucial here. Leo Shin’s assertion, for example, that Yunnan was “officially incorporated” during the Ming, seemingly a mere fact, is already a problematic representation.¹²¹ It misinterprets ‘Yunnan’ as an *a priori* geopolitical entity, instead of describing how ‘Yunnan’ was a set of Tai polities invaded, occupied, and absorbed by the early Ming, and then *made into* the province Yunnan.

Ming expansion, of course, has to be seen in a global early modern context. Empires were dominating and absorbing small-scale polities worldwide. There is a temptation in some works to see the Chinese states, such as the Ming, as the *only* colonising actors, while the surrounding polities appear as mere victims. However, as Geoff Wade has shown, various Asian polities were consistently engaged in expansionist aggression against their neighbours.¹²² To give but one example, despite Đại Việt’s expulsion of the occupying Ming armies in 1427, the polity internalised their former ruler’s bureaucracy and civilising ideology, successfully absorbing their southern neighbour Champa in the process.¹²³ One strength of Yang Bin’s 杨斌 work, again, is his placing of Yunnan in a truly global context, revealing that its fate was never dictated solely by China.¹²⁴ What has been mostly overlooked in all these fine studies is the role of language study within these processes; in particular, the function of institutions such as the *Bureau of Translators* within Ming colonial projects. Formerly independent Southeast Asian polities were gradually absorbed into the Chinese state, and, I shall argue, their languages were studied in the *Bureau* due to administrative needs. This was by no means the only function of the *Bureau* but it is one which has not received any significant scholarly attention yet.

¹¹⁹ John E. Herman (2007), *Amid the Clouds and Mist: China’s Colonization of Guizhou, 1200-1700* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center)

¹²⁰ Perdue (2005), *China Marches West*; Laura Hostetler (2001), *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

¹²¹ Shin (2006), *Making of the Chinese State*, 8.

¹²² Geoff Wade (2015), “Asian Expansions: An Introduction,” in Wade, *Asian Expansions*, 1-30.

¹²³ John Whitmore (2015), “The Thirteenth Province: Internal Administration and External Expansion in Fifteenth Century Đại Việt,” in Wade, *Asian Expansions*, 120-143.

¹²⁴ Yang Bin 杨斌 (2009), *Between Winds and Clouds: The Making of Yunnan* (New York: Columbia University Press), esp. 281.

On the whole, the *Bureau* founding in 1407 has not yet been systematically analysed in its historical context. By context I mean, first, the context of specific early Ming interactions with the outside world (colonial projects, Zheng He, trade). ‘Outside’ is a relative term though, as scholars see the Ming increasingly as part of a larger ensemble of post-Mongol societies in Eurasia. Allsen showed that the Ming shared repertoires of rule with courts across Eurasia, such as the royal hunt or falconry.¹²⁵ This thesis will enhance our knowledge by showing how this ‘shared vocabulary’ can even be traced in Ming bilingual glossaries. The universal imperial claim is another such shared concept, although not yet much associated with the Ming in scholarship. I will argue that the early Ming made such a claim, based on the framework developed by Bang and Kołodziejczyk, thereby placing this thesis in a comparative global-historic context and linking it to discussions in Empire Studies.¹²⁶ More than Bang and Kołodziejczyk, however, I will focus on aspects of language and translation. The very idea of universal empire is at odds with the concept of monolingualism, and consequently, the Ming could not have been monolingual, even if they had wanted to. Returning to the *Bureau* founding, context means, second, early Ming language policy in a broader sense. Third, and most importantly, context means the foundation of the *Bureau* in the afterglow of a ‘new world order’ that had been created by the Mongols, an era marked by “heightened interest in and intense fascination with foreign tongues and scripts” and inherited by the Ming.¹²⁷

3. Sources

Apart from court-produced historiography, sources examined by this thesis include normative works that originated in the *Bureau of Translators*, bilingual glossaries (*yi-yu*), extant translations, paratexts surrounding translations, and multilingual stele inscriptions. Textual sources are complemented by artefacts of material culture, such as non-Chinese inscriptions on ceramic objects, lacquerware, textiles, and seals. What follows is a basic overview of sources I will use. Particular source-critical issues will be dealt with in the different chapters. In addition, a selection of crucial primary sources in interlinear translation can be found in Appendix A.

¹²⁵ Allsen (2006), *Royal Hunt*.

¹²⁶ Bang & Kołodziejczyk (2012), *Universal Empire*. For a thorough discussion, see Chapter Three.

¹²⁷ Allsen (2001), “Rasûlid Hexaglot,” 25.

The *Veritable Records* (*shilu* 實錄), as one type of ‘official’ court-produced histories, collect administrative routine material, from which I will quote edicts in particular. Although edicts tell us more about their authors than about those they are meant to govern, they do allow conclusions about social realities. For example, what is forbidden (speaking ‘barbarian’ languages, interpreters privately trading with foreigners) is what is regularly happening. *Standard Histories* (*zhengshi* 正史), the second type of professionalised historiography, are the official accounts that new dynasties wrote about the history of their predecessors. While *Standard Histories* tend to minimise the contribution of non-court social groups, such as commoners, women, and—important for our focus—foreigners, historian Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526-1590) defined their significance succinctly: “the compilers of the dynastic histories do as they please and are good at concealing the truth, but the memorials and statutes they collect and the documents they pass on to us cannot be discarded” [雖然國史人恣而善蔽真，其敍章典，述文獻，不可廢也].¹²⁸ In other words, however biased, they are a treasury of much invaluable original material.

Official sources are not enough, however, to investigate Ming multilingualism or institutions such as the *Bureau of Translators*. Fortunately, the *Bureau*, like most bureaucratic entities, spilled a significant amount of ink in order to document its own existence.¹²⁹ The above-mentioned *Regulations for the Bureau of Translators* are the most comprehensive source dealing with the work of Ming translators in an institutional context.¹³⁰ The *Siyi guan kao* 四夷館考 [*Inspection of the Bureau of Translators*] (ca. 1580), on the other hand, describes foreign polities (some of them respectfully called a *guo* 國, a ‘civilised’ place, some not) with which the *Bureau* was interacting.¹³¹ It is, ultimately, a form of ethno-geographical treatise, similar to other products of this genre, such as the *Yingya shenglan* 瀛涯勝覽 [*Overall Survey of the Ocean’s Shores*] (1433), written by Ma Huan 馬歡 (ca. 1380-1460), a translator on Zheng He’s ships.¹³²

¹²⁸ Wang, Shizhen 王世貞 (1985 [1590]), *Yanshan tang bieji* 弇山堂別集 [*Alternative Records from the Yanshan Studio*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), *juan* 20, 361.

¹²⁹ The *Bureau of Interpreters*, regrettably, did not produce any similarly substantial documentation about itself.

¹³⁰ Lü, Weiqi 呂維祺 (compiler) & Haneda Toru 羽田亨 (editor) (1928 [1630/1688]), *Siyi guan ze* (Kyoto).

¹³¹ Wang Zongzai 王宗載 (1972 [c.1580], facsimile of 1924 publication of Ming original), *Siyi guan kao* (Taipei: Guangwen shuju).

¹³² Ma Huan (2005 [1433]), *Yingya shenglan* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju). This edition omits Ma’s preface which can be found in Ma Huan (author) & Wang Yunwu 王雲五 (editor) (1937 [1433]), *Yingya shenglan* (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan). A translation into English is J. V. G. Mills (1997), *Yingyai shenglan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Regarding the achievements of translators, we have basically bilingual glossaries (*yiyu*) and literary translations. Only for one extant glossary is an early Ming provenance absolutely certain: the Mongolian-Chinese *Huayi yiyu* 華夷譯語 [*Sino-Barbarian Translations and Transcriptions*] (1389), preserved through the Ming Palace edition and reproduced by Sun Yuxiu 孫毓修 (1871-1922).¹³³ In addition to the glossary proper they contain bilingual letters sent to Mongol steppe polities or received from them. Also, several late Ming *yiyu*-glossaries are extant: a Chinese-Tibetan *yiyu*, for example, is preserved in Manchester's *John Rylands Library*.¹³⁴ In particular, I located a collection of bilingual glossaries and texts in the *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin*, probably authored by *Bureau of Translators* staff between 1579 and 1644.¹³⁵ Regarding literary translations, two Persian-to-Chinese works on astronomy (including astrology) and one Mongolian-to-Chinese historical work are extant. The urtext of one of the Persian-to-Chinese translations, the *Tianwenshu* 天文書 [*Book on Heavenly Patterns*] (1383), was written by the astronomer and geographer Kūshyār ibn Labbān (971-1029).¹³⁶ The second Persian-to-Chinese adaptation, the *Huihui lifa* 回回曆法 [*Islamic System of Mathematical Astronomy*] (1380s), is the translation of a *zīj* زīj, or astronomical handbook, attributed to Zhamaluding 扎馬魯丁 (Jamāl al-Dīn, fl. 1255-1291), a Persian-speaking astronomer at the Yuan court. This *zīj* derived from original work done in the *Islamic Astronomical Bureau* in Mongol China.¹³⁷ Finally, the Mongolian-to-Chinese

¹³³ Huo Yuanjie 火原潔 & Ma Shaiyhei 馬沙衣黑 (1971 [1389]), *Huayi yiyu* 華夷譯語, ed. Wang Yunwu 王雲五 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan). This edition includes an original 1389 preface by Liu Sanwu plus a 1918 postface by Sun Yuxiu. Lewicki (1949), *La langue mongole*, 149-225, has the same facsimile, but without Liu's and Sun's paratexts.

¹³⁴ "Rylands Ms. 431." John Rylands Library, Manchester, *Crawford Chinese Collection*, no. 431, "Xi fan yi yu 西番譯語." Ming or Qing.

¹³⁵ "Hirth Ms. 1." 24 books (*ben* 本) in 6 vols. *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung*. My inspection of the manuscript in Summer 2013 revealed that the folios of the original 24 books had been folded and bound following the method of traditional Chinese bookbinding (stitched binding). The holes punched into the spine edge were clearly visible. However, the silk cord with which the manuscript had been stitched together was removed and books had been bound together into six European-style volumes of heavy appearance.

¹³⁶ Ma Shaiyhei 馬沙衣黑 et al. (translators) & Kūshyār ibn Labbān (author) (1996 [translation 1383, original ca. 990]), *Ming yi Tianwenshu* 明譯天文書 [*The 'Book on Heavenly Patterns,' Translated in the Ming*], in *Zhongguo huihui lifa jicong* 中國回回曆法輯叢 [*A Compilation of Islamic Astronomy in China*], ed. Ma Mingda 馬明達 & Chen Jing 陳靜 (Lanzhou: Gansu minzu chubanshe), 3-41. On Kūshyār, see Mohammad Bagheri (2007), "Ibn Labbān, Kūshyār: Kiyā Abū al-Ḥasan Kūshyār ibn Labbān Bāshahrī al-Jilī (Gīlānī)," in *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers*, ed. Thomas A. Hockey et al. (New York: Springer), 560-561. Yano Michio 矢野道雄 (1997), *Kūshyār Ibn Labbān's Introduction to Astrology* (Tokyo: Tōkyō Gaikokugo Daigaku Ajia Afurika Gengo Bunka Kenkyūjo), translated the Arabic original into English (the Persian text, used by the early Ming translators, was a translation itself). Benno van Dalen is currently preparing an English translation of the Chinese text.

¹³⁷ Benno van Dalen (2002), "Islamic Astronomical Tables in China: The Sources for the *Huihui li*," in *History of Oriental Astronomy*, ed. S. M. Razaullah Ansari (Dordrecht: Kluwer), 21.

translation is the *Mongghol-un nighuca tobchiyan* or *Yuanchao mishi* 元朝秘史 [Secret History of the Mongols], the oldest piece of Mongolian-language literature and the most significant account of Genghis Khan (1162-1227) from a Mongol perspective. Written anonymously for the Mongol royal family in the thirteenth century, perhaps in the Old Uyghur script, all surviving texts are early Ming transcriptions into Chinese characters, probably done between 1368-1389.

Approaching translations such as astronomical treatises, I do not focus on technical contents, which have been studied by Yabuuti Kiyosi 薮内清 (1906-2000), Chen Jiujin 陳久金, and Benno van Dalen.¹³⁸ Interesting to me are metadata, such as loan words which point to source languages and patterns of relay translation inherited from the Mongol era. For example, text-internal evidence in the *Islamic Astronomy* reveals Persian as a source language; other late Yuan or early Ming works contain both Arabic and Persian terms; and the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* do not only provide Chinese and Mongolian ‘equivalents’ but translate, occasionally, foreign words through other foreign words. Following on from that, more important than translations themselves are paratexts surrounding them. Paratexts, in the classic definition of Gérard Genette, are texts that accompany a work in order to ‘offer’ it to readers and to influence their reception of it.¹³⁹ This definition is useful for paratexts of early Ming translations as well, where we specifically deal with prefaces (*xu* 序), introductions (*yin* 引) and postscripts (*ba* 跋).¹⁴⁰ At least three paratexts proper are extant: the preface to the *Heavenly Patterns* written by Hanlin scholar Wu Bozong 吳伯宗 (1334-1384); an anonymous preface to the same work, attributed to the translator Ma Hama 馬哈麻 (Muḥammad); and the preface to the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* written by Hanlin scholar Liu Sanwu 劉三吾.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Dalen (2002), “Little Known Case of Transmission”; Yabuuti Kiyosi (author) & Benno van Dalen (translator) (1997), “Islamic Astronomy in China During the Yuan and Ming Dynasties,” *Historia Scientiarum* 7, 11-43; Chen Jiujin 陳久金 (1996), *Huihui tianwenxue shi yanjiu* 回回天文學史研究 [Investigations on the History of Muslim Astronomy] (Nanning: Guangxi kexue jishu chubanshe).

¹³⁹ See Gérard Genette (author) & Anonymous (translator) (1997), *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* [orig. *Seuils*] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

¹⁴⁰ For paratexts of translations, see Şehnaz Tahir Gürçağlar (2011), “Paratexts,” in *Handbook of Translation Studies*, vol. II, ed. Yves Gambier & Luc van Doorslaer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins), 113-116. Joachim Kurtz (2012) has demonstrated the historical significance of this genre in “Framing European Technology in Seventeenth-Century China: Rhetorical Strategies in Jesuit Paratexts,” in *Cultures of Knowledge: Technology in Chinese History*, ed. Dagmar Schäfer (Leiden: Brill), 209-232.

¹⁴¹ Wu, Bozong 吳伯宗 (1996 [1383]), *Yi Tianwen shu xu* 譯天文書序 [Preface of the Book on Heavenly Patterns], in Ma & Chen, *Zhongguo huihui lifa*, 2; Ma Hama 馬哈麻 (1996 [1383?]), *Tianwenshu xu* 譯天文書序 [(Unsigned) Preface to the Book on Heavenly Patterns], in Ma & Chen, *Zhongguo huihui lifa*, 3; Liu Sanwu 劉三吾 (1389), *Huayi yiyu xu* 華夷譯語序 [Preface to the Chinese-Barbarian Translations], in: Huo Yuanjie 火原潔 & Ma Shayihe 馬沙衣黑 (1971 [1389]), *Huayi yiyu*, ed. Wang Yunwu 王雲五 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館), 1-5.

In contrast to translations proper, paratexts shed light on the historical context and social and linguistic backgrounds of translators. They also reveal that more treatises must have been translated than are extant. Wu Bozong reports that the Yuan imperial library of Khanbaliq held “*hundreds* of books from the Western Regions, [full of] peculiar words and foreign characters” [西域書數百冊，言殊字異] and astronomy texts were “translated one after the other” [次第譯之].¹⁴² Nonetheless, the *Heavenly Patterns* and the *Islamic Astronomy* are the only two that survived. I treat them as evidence for the archetypical transmission case of the early Ming, where texts literally ‘left behind’ by the retreating Mongols were translated into Chinese and put into the use of the new dynasty. Finally, some early Ming translators appear in family genealogies, for example the trilingual Ma Shayihei 馬沙衣黑, involved in the Persian-to-Chinese *Heavenly Patterns* and the Mongolian-to-Chinese *Sino-Barbarian Translations*.¹⁴³ To what extent genealogies can supplement other sources will be discussed when their credibility regarding ‘translators as people’ becomes important.

4. Methods and terminology

Rather than simply applying a pre-existing method, this thesis blends ideas, concepts, and methods from history, sinological philology, and Linguistic Landscape Studies (LLS). Its methodological innovation is that it approaches old problems—the question of the openness or self-isolation of (Ming) Chinese society, as well as the nature and extent of the Mongol legacy in the (early) Ming—through the analytical framework of language policy. ‘Linguistic landscape’ is the first specific approach to be defined. Second, we must confront the question to what extent concepts like ‘language policy’ are applicable to the early Ming world. Third, bilingual glossaries—often seen from a purely ‘linguistic’ viewpoint—are introduced as ‘historical’ sources. Fourth, I will discuss my approaches to problematic terms in the sources. Fifth, and lastly, the focus on ‘translators as people’ will be explained.

The first methodological concept to be exposed is that of ‘linguistic landscape’ (LL), which I use in the sense of Jan Blommaert, Peter Backhaus, and

¹⁴² Wu (1996 [1383]), *Preface to the Heavenly Patterns*, 2. My emphasis.

¹⁴³ The two genealogies are *Nanjing Dace tang Ma guazhou* 南京‘大測堂馬’掛軸 [*Hanging scroll from the ‘Hall of the Great Observer Ma’ in Nanjing*; henceforth: *Nanjing Scroll*] and the *Juzhen tang Ma Shi zongpu* 聚真堂馬氏宗譜 [*Genealogy of the Family Ma from the Juzhen Studio*; henceforth: *Ma Genealogy*], both in their current versions compiled in the early Republican period and reprinted in Ma & Chen, *Zhongguo huihui lifa*, 1025-1026.

others, to read back from multilingual signs to the complex histories of places.¹⁴⁴ The notion of LL proposes that language exists not only in people's heads but is, in written form, part of physical space, turning the latter through semiotic activity into social, cultural, and political space. While Blommaert and Backhaus document and analyse LL in late-modern globalised cities such as Tokyo or Antwerp, I apply and adapt their approach to the early Ming empire; to its capitals Nanjing and Beijing—centres of language contact just like their modern successors—and its borderlands. Naturally, while Blommaert et al. investigate publicly visible written language in contemporary cities, I restrict myself to fragmentary evidence, or the 'signs' that coincidentally have come down to us from the early Ming LL, such as multilingual stele inscriptions. Just like modern evidence analysed in LLS, such inscriptions obey the elementary semiotic principle that every sign has three temporal dimensions: it points back in time to its creators, into the future to the audience selected to consume it, and to the (early Ming) 'present,' characterised by its non-random installation in space.¹⁴⁵ A more specific method will distinguish the functional aspects of multilingual signs as both communicative—carrying information—and emblematic, invoking the Mongol past through the 'magic' of various written languages. Both aspects, I shall argue, were crucial to the Ming's universal imperial claim.

Other signs are even less 'mere texts' but parts of material culture proper, such as non-Chinese inscriptions on ceramic objects, lacquerware, textiles, and seals.¹⁴⁶ These object-texts, while not 'signs' in the above sense (semiotisation of space), are comparable in that they combine emblematic and communicative functions. They belong to LL in the traditional, more general sense, which I also apply in this thesis, referring to the totality of languages people spoke, read and wrote in Ming China and its borderlands. Regarding this second category of 'signs,' Ming porcelains might yield the greatest return. Although research on them has advanced enormously, many elements of their social history remain unclear, such as the fact that throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, imperial kilns produced blue-

¹⁴⁴ Significant works in LLS include Peter Backhaus (2007), *Linguistic Landscapes: A Comparative Study of Urban Multilingualism in Tokyo* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters); Elana Goldberg Shohamy & Durk Gorter (eds.) (2009), *Linguistic Landscape: Expanding the Scenery* (New York: Routledge); and Jan Blommaert (2013), *Ethnography, Superdiversity and Linguistic Landscapes: Chronicles of Complexity* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters). For a recent case study, see Leonie Gaiser (2014), "Reading the Curry Mile: Language Use in the Linguistic Landscape of Rusholme, Manchester," <http://mlm.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/category/features/> (*Multilingual Manchester* website), accessed 6 February 2015.

¹⁴⁵ Blommaert (2013), *Linguistic Landscapes*, 40-41.

¹⁴⁶ Some examples appear in James C. Y. Watt & Denise P. Leidy (eds.) (2005), *Defining Yongle: Imperial Art in Early Fifteenth Century China* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art).

and-white porcelains bearing non-Chinese inscriptions.¹⁴⁷ While earlier chapters of this thesis draw attention to the written presence of languages (the older general sense of LL), later chapters show how some of them were ingredients of signs with distinct language combinations (the newer specific sense of LL).¹⁴⁸ Thus, a historical perspective is offered to LLS—a perspective this new mode of inquiry (1997 saw the seminal study, 2015 the first journal devoted to the field) is at times lacking.¹⁴⁹ Blommaert’s use of ‘superdiversity,’ for instance, implies that the migration and degree of diversity in late-modern globalised cities are without precedent.¹⁵⁰ However, the long-term history of human migrations reveals highly diverse conurbations in various parts of the world since earliest times. In this vein, Florian Coulmas looked at linguistic landscaping from a broad angle and concluded that it is as old as writing. Many of the earliest functions of writing (property marks, border stones) were bound to public display, and multilingual forms appear early on.¹⁵¹ It is thus valid to speak of linguistic landscaping for the early Ming as well.

To what extent then can modern linguistic concepts be applied to the early Ming world? Regarding multilingualism, I would argue, in accordance with the perspective of Alex Mullen, that a comparison between ancient and modern case studies is valid because the phenomena are “created through analogous linguistic interactions and are representative of similar human processes.” Many theories are only ‘modern’ in that they are products “of the modern world and, in some sense, ‘under construction,’ rather than only being applicable to modern contexts.”¹⁵² ‘Language policy,’ similarly, is not just a modern fact. As Harold F. Schiffman has argued, language policies can be *overt* (explicit, formalised, *de jure*) or *covert* (implicit, unstated, *de facto*), but a state without language policy is as impossible to

¹⁴⁷ Robinson (2008), “Ming Court,” 405. For a global-historic exploration of Ming porcelains, see Robert Finlay (2010), *The Pilgrim Art: Cultures of Porcelain in World History* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 161-169. For “Porcelain and the Material Culture of the Mongol-Yuan Court,” see the eponymous article by Anne Gerritsen (2012), *Journal of Early Modern History* 16, 241-273.

¹⁴⁸ For an overview relating methodological approaches to specific chapters, see ‘Thesis structure.’

¹⁴⁹ The seminal study, introducing the term (taken from the French *paysage linguistique*), is Rodrigue Landry & Richard Y. Bourhis (1997), “Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality: An Empirical Study,” *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 16, 23-49. The first issue of *Linguistic landscape: An international journal*, edited by Elana Goldberg Shohamy and Eliezer Ben-Rafael, appeared in 2015.

¹⁵⁰ Blommaert (2013), *Linguistic Landscapes*, 4-5.

¹⁵¹ For example, the Rosetta Stone (Ptolemaic dynasty, 305-30 BC) or the Behistun Inscription (Achaemenid empire, 550-330 BC). Florian Coulmas (2009), “Linguistic Landscaping and the Seed of the Public Sphere,” in Shohamy & Gorter, *Expanding the Scenery*, 13-24.

¹⁵² Alex Mullen (2012), “Introduction: Multiple Languages, Multiple Identities,” in Alex Mullen & Patrick James (eds.), *Multilingualism in the Graeco-Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 5.

find as a society without language prescriptions and taboos.¹⁵³ Speaking of ‘early Ming language policies,’ I do not imply that there was any coordinated *overt* policy, as in some modern states. The Ming, however, had to come to terms with the fact that human beings speak many different, mutually incomprehensible languages—just as any other society, then and now, and particularly as any empire with universal claims. Basically, language policy means encouraging or discouraging the use of particular languages and deciding *how* they are used—a phenomenon that we do find in the early Ming. I will heed Schiffman’s advice that one should not equate language policies with *overt* language planning and Bernard Spolsky’s suggestion that such policies are more likely to be found in practices than in formal codes.¹⁵⁴

On this basis, I define ‘language policy’ as *the sum of decisions of early Ming administrations* regarding languages and translation. While recognising that not all activities with which this thesis is concerned would have been seen as connected by early Ming actors, I argue that they do collectively constitute a realm of action with a common purpose. To go one step further, these activities are also not commonly seen under one analytic umbrella in modern scholarship. Looking at them through the framework of this thesis—language policy, universal empire, and Mongol legacy—will shed new light on the nature of the early Ming. Examples for language policy, in this sense, include the following decisions: to found a *Bureau of Translators*, to study particular languages there, to translate particular texts, and to use particular languages in multilingual inscriptions and documents inside and outside the empire. All these questions concern a crucial element of language policy: *status planning*, the choice of language, including attitudes towards alternative languages. This language policy was *covert*, not *overt*. It was not imposed through legal statutes—early Ming rulers ‘just did it.’ As the answer to the LL that was already there, early Ming language policy—as in the modern world—was rarely just about language; it always had political dimensions. And as today, while at times language learning was imposed by political agendas (the Ming state attempting to enforce standardised Chinese in border areas), some language choices were entered into freely for reasons of social mobility and economic advantage.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Harold F. Schiffman (2002), *Linguistic Culture and Language Policy* (New York: Routledge), passim; esp. 13-15.

¹⁵⁴ Bernard Spolsky (2004), *Language Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Schiffman (2002), *Linguistic Culture*, esp. 3-4.

¹⁵⁵ On the relation between ‘forced’ language learning and ‘free’ language choices, see Sue Wright (2004), *Language Policy and Language Planning: From Nationalism to Globalisation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), passim.

The decision to study particular languages at the *Bureau of Translators* is the status planning aspect of early Ming language policy. One result of this study was the production of bilingual glossaries (*yiyu* 譯語). Almost all scholars mentioned above (Lewicki, Haenisch, Mostaert, Ligeti) are interested in the two *Bureaus* from a linguistic viewpoint. Indeed, the *yiyu* are of great importance for reconstructing the development of the Mongolian languages, and have even been used to reconstruct dead languages such as Jurchen. However, we know much less about the historical actors who produced them and the contexts in which they worked. What Serruys once remarked with regards to the presence of Mongols in China, that “the interest of (...) scholars has been centred more on the linguistic than the historical aspect,”¹⁵⁶ is equally true for the history of the *Bureaus* and their achievements. Here my research adopts a ‘historical’ rather than ‘linguistic’ approach.¹⁵⁷ I see glossary compilation as a cultural activity stimulated by social, economic, and individual demands in a specific historical situation. My transcription of all Chinese ‘lemmata’ of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* (Appendix B) assists this approach and examines how these vocabularies can be characterised. What foreign terms were deemed important and how were they translated and organised according to Chinese epistemic paradigms? What does this tell us about early Ming views and knowledge of the world? In short, *what interested the word collectors and who were they?* *Yiyu* also resolve ambiguities regarding actual languages, especially the so-called ‘*huihui* (Muslim) 回回 language,’ which is actually Persian (and not Arabic, as some have asserted), and the so-called ‘*Baiyi* (hundred barbarians) 百夷 languages’ of Yunnan.¹⁵⁸

It must be pointed out at this juncture that the word *Yi* 夷 in words such as *Baiyi* 百夷 is surrounded by problems of terminology and translation. Consider what was argued earlier and apply it here: if it is indeed problematic to talk about ‘China’ and ‘the Chinese’ in national or ethnic terms before the nineteenth century, if it is true that the early Ming imagined itself not in terms of ‘Chinese’ ethnicity, but as the *Zhongguo* ‘Central Realm’ of civilisation, in what terms then did it imagine its ‘Others’ whose languages it translated? This leads directly into an ongoing discussion as to how to deal with certain terms in Chinese primary sources, such as *Hu* 胡 (which we will encounter in combinations such as ‘*Hu* languages’ [胡語]) or *Yi* 夷, as

¹⁵⁶ Serruys (1959), *Sino-Mongol Relations* I, 6.

¹⁵⁷ In scare quotes because you cannot separate language from history and if historians and linguists talked to each other more it would be highly beneficial to all concerned.

¹⁵⁸ For example, Ma Zuyi 馬祖毅 (1995), “History of Translation in China,” in Chan & Pollard, *Encyclopaedia of Translation*, 373, speaks of Arabic-Chinese glossaries.

in *Siyi guan* 四夷館 (customarily called the *Bureau of Translators*). Some scholars translate *Hu* and *Yi* as ‘barbarians,’ others use ‘foreigners,’ and some choose *not* to translate but to incorporate the terms as loanwords into English. More often than not, the reasons behind these translational choices are not revealed, which is unfortunate, because translations are not evidence—a problem much neglected in historical writing. All translations are already *interpretations* of the original evidence, thus *part of the argument*, and thus open to questioning. To enable such questioning, I always quote the Chinese original directly after my translation.¹⁵⁹

I argue, first, that *Yi* and *Hu* do carry derogatory overtones.¹⁶⁰ This is proven by the fact that after 1644 the character *Yi* 夷 in *Siyi guan* was seen as insulting to the ‘foreign’ Manchus and changed into the homophonic *yi* 譯 ‘translation.’ Second, while *Yi* originally had some ‘ethnic value,’ it turned (comparable to the ‘Vandals’ in European history) into a generic *civilisational* term, referring to people at the periphery who “sometimes eat their food without cooking it” [有不火食者].¹⁶¹ Third, the term *Yi* cannot be understood in separation from its antonym *Hua* 華, denoting the realm of civilisation. We encounter these antithetical terms united in the name of the first Ming bilingual glossary of 1389: *Huayi yiyu* 華夷譯語 (roughly: ‘Translating *Yi* words into *Hua* words’). Both terms are defined *culturally* and not ethnically, shown by the fact that most early Ming writers agree that *Yi* could turn into *Hua* through education: the ‘culturalist’ persuasion in Ming discourse. Against this backdrop, the definitions given by the canonical *Hanyu dacidian* 漢語大詞典 [*Comprehensive Chinese Word Dictionary*] (1987) appear ahistorical. The ‘Hua-Yi 華夷’ entry, for example, states that the term “denotes the Han-Chinese and national minorities, and later, China and foreign countries” [指漢族與少數民族。後亦指中國和外國]. Derogatory overtones are swept under the carpet and the antagonists of the Central Realm are retrospectively turned into ‘minorities’ of a nation state that did not exist at the time. Moreover, we do find generic terms lacking barbaric flavour: *fan* 番 and *wai* 外, for example, are both used as one would say today ‘abroad.’ Comparing the use of those terms in early Ming sources with the use of *Yi* and *Hu* reveals the connotations ‘uncivilised, uncouth, barbarian, non-*Hua*’ of the latter.

¹⁵⁹ These thoughts concerning method in translation owe much to a workshop which I developed together with Edmund Chapman, called ‘How to Read Translated Sources,’ and run in March and November 2015 as part of the *ArtsMethods* programme of the *University of Manchester*.

¹⁶⁰ The complex question of *Hu* and *Yi* would deserve a book of its own. Due to limitations of space, Appendix C ‘Translating the Barbarians’ provides further concrete examples to support my argument.

¹⁶¹ *Liji* 禮記 [*Book of Rites*], ch. “Wang Zhi 王制” [Royal Regulations], § 36, quoted after CTEXT.

While there is no perfect way to approach early Ming texts in this regard, it is important to reveal the underlying translational choices. I suggest that translating *Yi* as ‘barbarian’ comes closer to the historical meaning than the politically correct ‘foreigner.’ Moreover, standard translations, for the purpose of this thesis, work better than incorporating various Chinese terms referring to people or things outside the Central Realm as loan words. While the latter option could be welcomed from the standpoint of philological exactness, readers unfamiliar with Chinese linguistics might find this tedious. I will therefore translate *Yi* and *Hu* (and the less frequent *man* 蠻) standardised as ‘barbarian,’ and *fan* and *wai* standardised as ‘foreign.’ Occasionally, I will simply transliterate the original terms, exposing the translatedness of the text and encouraging readers to draw their own conclusions. In parallel, the common early Ming terms for their polity will not be translated anachronistically as ‘China’ but rendered literally and standardised as Central Realm (*Zhongguo*), Central Plains (*Zhongyuan* 中原), and Central Lands (*Zhongtu* 中土).

Terms such as *Yi* are important, because they refer to the people I speak about in this thesis: translators, more often than not, belonged to the *Yi*. The thesis focuses more on translators than on translated texts. It agrees with Anthony Pym that “translation history should make greater room for translators as people” in order to reconstruct their roles as historical mediators.¹⁶² Translators as people are significant because, in spite of the popular phrase that ‘knowledge travelled’ or ‘texts travelled’ from Greece to Arabia, from Arabia to Persia, from Persia to China, etc., texts cannot travel by their own. Texts cannot make history, only humans can—and without human translators, texts cannot travel on a global scale at all. If all humanity spoke one common language, as famously imagined in the biblical story of the Tower of Babel, this would be thoroughly possible. In the real world, however, knowledge ‘on the road’ (as mental property of a person or in externalised form as text or artefact) is negotiating not only perilous deserts, mountains, and oceans, but even greater obstacles: language and script barriers. Only human translators have the potential agency to overcome these barriers, but they often remain nebulous figures. In the words of Lawrence Venuti, translators are as powerful as they are invisible.¹⁶³ Frequently, the sources create the illusion that, in situations where they were undoubtedly needed, translators were not involved at all. If sources report, for

¹⁶²Anthony Pym (1998), *Method in Translation History* (Manchester: St. Jerome), 36; and (2009), “Humanising Translation History,” *Hermes* 42, 23-48

¹⁶³ Lawrence Venuti (1995), *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge).

instance, that the Ming founder wrote a letter to a Persian ruler, we should immediately ask: was the letter in question written in Chinese? In Persian? Was a bilingual version prepared, and if so, by whom? Historical interpreters are even more difficult to trace than translators. As interpreters provided more or less simultaneous translations of the spoken word, it was not necessary for them to be literate and they often were not. They were less concerned with texts, thus their names were less likely to be recorded. In most cases, they remain invisible agents.

In contrast, this thesis will pay significant attention to the roles of individual language mediators in the Ming founding phase. The problem is challenging, as primary sources are scant. No official sources are centred around translators, not even the *Regulations for the Bureau of Translators* give much away in this regard. The intense paratextual material surrounding the late Ming Jesuit translations (ca. 140 paratexts written by ca. 63 different authors) is absent for the early Ming.¹⁶⁴ I could locate but three paratexts proper, as introduced above. Nevertheless, a close examination of Mongol migration history and of early Ming policies towards ‘non-Chinese,’ together with at least a prosopographical investigation of the geographic and ethnic origins of early Ming translators, will provide significant insights about ‘translators as people’ and reveal biographical dimensions of the Mongol legacy. This is where the first chapter will begin.

5. Thesis structure

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter One sets the stage by drawing attention to the non-Chinese populations inherited by the Ming from the Mongol empire. It discusses the extent and nature of these populations, to explain the role they played in the policies of early Ming rulers. From this big picture, the chapter will gradually narrow its focus. The second step is to investigate how the Ming dealt with populations with a ‘Mongol migration background.’ Challenging depictions of the Ming as insular and xenophobic, this chapter separates lofty sinocentric rhetoric and ‘barbarian bashing’ from realpolitik, thereby revealing that policies towards foreigners were ambivalent and mostly pragmatic. The term ‘Hongwu dilemma’ will be suggested to refer to the contradictions of the Ming founding era, in particular

¹⁶⁴ I have compiled a table of all authors that produced Chinese-language paratexts for late Ming Jesuit translations and publications in Johannes Sebastian Lotze (2012), “Übersetzen und Dolmetschen in der chinesischen Ming-Dynastie (1368-1644) am Beispiel der Tätigkeit der Jesuiten (ca. 1583-1644),” Magister Thesis, Freie Universität Berlin, 99.

anti-Mongol rhetoric versus ‘liberal’ immigration policies. Third, the chapter moves from populations-at-large to individuals, showing that the Ming were intent on making the most of the various talents of their subjects—not because they clung to ideas of general tolerance, but rather due to the natural needs of an imperial administration. One such talent was bilingual competence, brought in mainly by foreigners and immigrants, and channelled into institutions of the new dynasty. This chapter will approach the biographical dimension of the Mongol legacy by prosopographically exploring the origins of individual translators. The final step will be to focus on two specific foreign-descent translators as a case study.

Chapter Two shifts the focus from ‘translators as people’ to the languages people spoke. In order to examine Mongol legacy in the realm of language, it uses the concept of the linguistic landscape (LL) in the traditional, more general sense and draws attention to the written presence of languages in the early Ming. While the concept of ‘language policy’ is not usually associated with approaches to Ming history, this chapter shows that its application is an innovative method for understanding the intricacies of the Yuan-Ming transition. Based on the definition of ‘language policy’ as the sum of administrative decisions on languages and translation, this chapter zooms in on the decision to found a *Bureau of Translators*. As a new institution, established in 1407, the *Bureau* reveals the specific needs of the early Ming, and the choice of languages to be studied there will be discussed as a case of *status planning*, a fundament of all language policy. Based on the hypothesis that the *Bureau* foundation cannot be properly understood without considering Mongol legacies in the realm of language learning, the chapter surveys the *Bureau* curriculum. After clarifying why status planning decided to *omit* certain languages, it will show how several *Bureau* languages were entangled with Mongol legacy. Beginning with less obvious cases, it moves to Mongolian and Persian, the major ‘Yuan legacy languages.’ As a result, the distinction between ‘multilingual foreign’ and ‘monolingual Chinese’ dynasties in China will be questioned.

Chapter Three investigates functional aspects of early Ming multilingualism. It opens with a brief overview of activities which this thesis treats as part of ‘language policy,’ and argues that all of them were both practical as well as symbolic, or, in Linguistic Landscape Studies (LLS) terminology, communicative as well as emblematic. It then shows how both dimensions were connected to the early Ming’s claim to be a ‘universal empire.’ First of all, the chapter defines this concept and suggests that such a universal claim—until now, seldom associated with Ming rule in

scholarship—did indeed exist, continuing in certain cases specific Mongol forms of universalism. This opens up new perspectives on early Ming multilingualism, certain features of which could not be fully understood without this universal claim. One aspect of universal empire, known to historians of China as the ‘tribute system,’ will be examined more closely. The chapter discusses tribute, trade, and translation in the *Bureau of Interpreters* as practical and down-to-earth reasons for multilingual competence: day-to-day dealings with foreign envoys who were mostly also traders. It then looks at further functions of multilingualism, in which communicative and emblematic (practical and symbolic) aspects increasingly overlap. The chapter focuses on multilingual inscriptions as prime examples and applies the LL concept in the specific sense of LLS, examining how languages were ingredients of multilingual signs with particular language combinations, and how these signs are evidence of the early Ming view and order of the world.

Chapter Four looks at situations in which linguistic differences no longer symbolise imperial unity but obstacles in the civilising process, or *jiaohua*, which the Ming, in its self-perception, was destined to advance. Anchored in the debate on ‘sinicisation,’ the chapter looks at this problem from the perspective of language. It argues that while recent attacks on the concept are justified to some degree, it makes sense to speak of sinicisation in three ways. First, ‘voluntary’ (partial) self-sinicisation through language choices left a legacy for the Ming in the form of bilingual individuals. Second, ‘sinicisation’ is not just a theory developed by historians but was a conscious political strategy of the early Ming, in which language played a distinct role. Third, linguistic differences were at times perceived as barriers preventing the success of this very project of sinicisation. By revealing contrasting early Ming literati voices, the chapter shows that ‘literati’ or ‘scholar-officials’ were not at all a homogenous group: while some spoke from a pulpit of cultural superiority (language study helps us to lecture the barbarians), others made the opposite point (language study enables us to learn from the barbarians). The chapter as a whole shows how the Ming were acutely aware of linguistic diversity, knew they were not alone in the world, and took steps to achieve multilingual competence. At the same time, they enforced Chinese language (a standard form based on the Nanjing dialect) and script (cosmopolitan literary Chinese) as the primary symbol and means of communication.

Chapter Five opens with a brief survey of the early Ming educational system, in order to determine, within it, the place of language study, the professional self-awareness and social status of translators, translation practices in their institutional environments, and the role of the Mongol legacy. First, the chapter discusses whether we can speak of ‘professional’ translators in the sociological sense, that is, whether the Ming created identities that were structured around the possession of abstract ‘professional knowledge,’ acquired through formal education. This chapter argues that while both Mongol and early Ming rulers furthered professionalisation, much translation work was done ‘unprofessionally’ by officials who just ‘happened’ to be bilingual. In particular, it will show how translation was performed as a collaboration between individuals with different linguistic skills, a situation that will be explained both against the backdrop of larger patterns in Chinese translation history and the specifics of the Yuan-Ming transition. Finally, the chapter unites several threads of the overall argument through a case study of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* glossary of 1389. Examining this achievement of early Ming translators, we can ‘read back’ not only to functions of the glossary, but also to the word collectors. Who were they, what interested them, and why? Approaching glossary compilation as a cultural practice, the chapter specifies the nature and extent of Mongol legacies by providing evidence for it on four levels of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* (institutional, biographical, text-structural, and lexical). As specific as some linguistic micro-levels might seem, it is exactly this specificity that illustrates the far-reaching extent of the Mongol legacy.

CHAPTER ONE

Mongol-era migration and the Hongwu dilemma

Having grown up in the world the Mongols had created, the Ming founders did not sweep away Yuan achievements just because they were ‘foreign.’ Mongol legacy was omnipresent, reaching from paintings depicting Ming emperors in the pose of *khagans*, or Great Khans, in Mongol-style garb, to the introduction of new food stuffs to China, such as sorghum.¹ Territory was another form of legacy, with the Ming continuing colonial projects of the Mongols, such as the conquest and absorption of the Yunnan region.² The role of language and translation in these transition processes though, as I have argued, has been relatively overlooked. This chapter sets the stage by exploring the nature and size of non-Chinese populations and personnel which the Ming inherited from the preceding empire. By separating rhetoric from realpolitik, it will show that policies were not anti-Mongol or xenophobic but ambivalent and mostly pragmatic. Proceeding from populations-at-large to individuals, the chapter will then focus on those immigrants and foreigners who were employed as translators, in order to reveal biographical dimensions of the Mongol legacy. Examining the fate of Mongol-inherited populations and individuals, this chapter critically discusses the image of the “fiercely anti-Mongol”³ Ming, which persists in spite of the recent criticism of Robinson and other ‘New Ming’ historians.

1. Populations with ‘Mongol migration background’

While a Chinese folk legend tells of one night in which all Mongols were massacred and the foreign dynasty overthrown, nothing in the sources even alludes to such a conspiracy.⁴ Very much in contrast, the Ming actively recruited defeated or surrendered Mongols into their ethnically diverse armies.⁵ For instance, a “Yuan

¹ For Ming emperors depicted as *khagans*, see the various examples and images in Robinson (2008), “Ming Court.” For the dietary dimension, see Frederick Mote (1977), “Yüan and Ming,” in *Food in Chinese Culture: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Chang Kwang-chih (New Haven: Yale University Press), 193-257.

² Yunnan languages, as studied by the *Bureau of Translators*, will be discussed in Chapter Two.

³ Standen (2013), “Foreign Conquerors of China,” 39.

⁴ For that legend, see Carol Stepanchuk & Charles Choy Wong (1991), *Mooncakes and Hungry Ghosts: Festivals of China* (San Francisco: China Books & Periodicals), 55.

⁵ For large-scale recruitments in 1387-1388, see Serruys (1959), *Sino-Mongol Relations I*, 66-70.

officer” [元將] named Tuoliebai 脫列佰 (Töre-beg?) was taken over and reorganised Mongol troops scattered over several provinces.⁶ Later emperors explicitly warned border generals to prevent the harassment of Mongols who wanted to join the Ming, as some troops were tempted to kill them and claim a reward.⁷ Mongols and Jurchens were sought after for their skills as mounted archers and their knowledge of the Northern terrain. The Korean *Yijo sillok* 李朝實錄 [*Veritable Records of the Yi Dynasty*] confirm that Koreans as well as Jurchens who had gone over to Chinese territory were duly registered as soldiers.⁸ The early Ming army, a major institution of at least one million professional soldiers receiving a state wage, thus played a similar integrative role as the military in the Roman, British, or Ottoman empires or the Muscovite Rus.⁹ Regardless of whether newcomers already spoke some form of Chinese or became bilingual through their service, we must imagine the Ming army as an environment structurally inclined towards multilingualism. As Martin Heijdra noted, some military garrisons functioned as linguistic enclaves, preserving at least a portion of the language of migrated populations.¹⁰

Beyond the military, the Ming inherited large numbers of Mongols, Jurchens, Koreans, Khitans, Central Eurasians, Turks, and Arabs, who had been affiliated with the Mongol *ulus* and were working in various institutions.¹¹ When the last Yuan emperor, Toghon Temür (r. 1333-1370), and his court fled Khanbaliq (Beijing), these populations did not just vanish with him. The historical demographer Wu Songdi 吳松弟 suggests that during Yuan rule around two million non-Chinese migrated to China proper, roughly a fifth of them Mongols.¹² Three decades after the Ming founding, nearly 300,000 of the 360,000 people in Beijing’s civilian households

⁶ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Hongwu, *juan* 187, 2808.

⁷ Serruys (1959), *Sino-Mongol Relations* I, 19, 70-83, esp. 71 note 85, and 73.

⁸ Choi Byonghyon (translator) (2014), *The Annals of King T’aejo: Founder of Korea’s Choson Dynasty* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press), 303.

⁹ On the size of the Ming army, see David M. Robinson (2014), “Wu: The Arts of War,” in Clunas & Harrison-Hall, *Ming*, 122; on Ming military culture in general, see Robinson (2013), *Martial Spectacles*.

¹⁰ Martin Heijdra (1995), “A Preliminary Note on Cultural Geography and Ming History,” *Ming Studies* 34, 49-51.

¹¹ David M. Robinson (2012). “Mongolian Migration and the Ming’s Place in Eurasia,” *Journal of Central Eurasian Studies* 3, 114. Mong. *ulus* ‘people; state’ originally referred to all of Genghis’s empire and then to the parts of it left to his heirs: the Ilkhanate in Persia, the Chagatai Khanate and the Golden Horde in Central Eurasia, and Yuan China.

¹² See Wu Songdi (1997), *Zhongguo yiminshi* 中國移民史 [*Immigration History of China*], vol. IV: *Liao Song Jin Yuan shiqi* 遼宋金元時期 [*The Liao, Song, Jin and Yuan Periods*] (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe), 603, and in general chapter 17, “Immigration of non-Han people and Mongol Yuan society” [非漢民族內遷與蒙元社會], 603-640.

(*minhu* 民戶) were Mongols or their direct descendants.¹³ People with such a ‘Mongol migration background’¹⁴ thus constituted a considerable part of the early Ming population of, in total, 60 million or more.¹⁵ If we take Yuan-era migration history into account, the fact that there were Mongols and other foreigners all over China, with the heaviest concentration in the provinces around Nanjing, is logical.¹⁶

Migration was a legacy—but also a continuing process. In spite of rigorous laws restricting border movements, a wealth of evidence shows that the northern border was porous.¹⁷ Mongols and Jurchens who settled in Liaodong were technically Ming subjects but often ‘commuted’ freely between Ming territory and their homelands.¹⁸ Such realities are obscured if the Great Wall is seen as the petrified wish for perpetual isolation, as “the symbol of a land turned in on itself, one which had closed off even the last frontier which had been left by nature.”¹⁹ The Great Wall, as we know it today, did not even exist in the early Ming: construction was begun in the late fifteenth century.²⁰ In particular, the Great Wall (or its smaller, early Ming forerunners) controlled migration *both ways*, protecting the empire against invasions by its northern neighbours *and* preventing Ming subjects from joining their polities.²¹ Not just Mongols migrated to China, Chinese also went over to Mongol territories, some of them to escape the onerous Ming labour services.²²

¹³ Cao Shuji 曹樹基 (2000), *Zhongguo renkoushi* 中國人口史 [*Population History of China*, vol. IV: *Ming shiqi* 明時期 [*The Ming Period*] (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe), 257.

¹⁴ ‘Mongol migration background’ will henceforth be used as a shortcut to refer to populations and individuals that moved into China proper as a result of the huge migrations of the Mongol era.

¹⁵ An imperial census of the year 1393 counted 60,545,812 individuals in 10,652,789 households. However, the real number must have been higher, as people evaded registration for various reasons. See Ping-ti Ho 何炳棣 [He Bingdi] (1959), *Studies on the Population of China, 1368-1953* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press), 10-17.

¹⁶ See the presentation of research results for every province in Serruys (1959), *Sino-Mongol Relations* I, 176-213.

¹⁷ Jiang Yonglin 姜永琳 (2011), *The Mandate of Heaven and the Great Ming Code* (Seattle: University of Washington Press), 100-141.

¹⁸ Robinson (2012), “Mongolian Migration,” 116, 120.

¹⁹ The sinologist Wolfgang Bauer (1930-1997), quoted in Arthur Waldron (1990), *The Great Wall of China: From History to Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 171.

²⁰ Peter Lorge (2013), “The Great Wall,” in Standen, *Demystifying China*, 25-32; Waldron (1990), *Great Wall*.

²¹ Beckwith (2009), *Empires of the Silk Road*, 330; Serruys (1967), *Sino-Mongol Relations* II, 2.

²² For an example of ‘Ming refugees’ related to the frontier wars of 1468-1469, see John Wolfe Dardess (2013), *Ming China, 1368-1644: A Concise History of a Resilient Empire* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield), 12. For a study of individuals fleeing the ‘side effects’ of empire- and nation-building—slavery, corvée labour, taxes, warfare—that puts such examples into a larger context, see James C. Scott (2009), *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press).

While Mongol migration into the Central Realm—continuing throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—was routinely portrayed as ‘submission’ by the Ming court, the reasons were naturally more complex, including inner-Mongol rivalries and simply the desire of Mongol families to live in comparative safety.²³ In 1408, the Ming set up two communities, Anle 安樂 and Zizai 自在, for Jurchens who decided to settle within China or in its borderlands. The court provided settlers with paper money, robes, oxen, sheep, grain, and materials for constructing houses.²⁴ In return, immigrants offered their local products as ‘tribute’ and served as translators and interpreters, as later sections of this chapter will show. How the early Ming handled migration, as a given and as an ongoing process, is the focus of the next section. How did the Ming, often labelled ‘antiforeign’ and ‘xenophobic,’ actually perceive non-Chinese populations inherited from their Mongol predecessors? What kind of policies did they adopt towards them?

2. Early Ming policies towards foreigners

Any sound methodological approach must separate, as best as possible, lofty sinocentric rhetoric and ‘barbarian-bashing’ from realpolitik. This distinction was not always consciously made in the secondary literature, which is one reason for the image of the ‘closed’ Ming. Equally critical is the selection of primary sources. In a recent, deeply learned article on the early Ming, Shen Weirong 沈衛榮 quotes a primary source which states that “preventing barbarians from mixing with the Han in China” was a policy of the period as well as the usual strategy of Chinese states. It turns out, however, that the quotation is taken from the *Daodejing* 道德經 [*Classic of the Way*], a text that was already more than 1,500 years old at Hongwu’s time, and whose possible relevance for early Ming or other Chinese policies is not explicated.²⁵ While such use of sources is questionable, we do find anti-barbarian polemics in the early Ming. Thus, at first glance, the image of the fiercely anti-Mongol Ming seems

²³ For migration in the fifteenth century, see Henry Serruys (1968), “The Mongols in China: 1400-1450,” *Monumenta Serica* 27, 233-305; for the Hongwu period, see Serruys (1959), *Sino-Mongol Relations* I. On inner-Mongol rivalries, see Robinson (2012), “Mongolian Migration,” 116-118; “Arts of War,” 118. By the early fifteenth century, several rival Mongol polities had emerged on the steppe, most significantly the Oirats or Western Mongols, the Eastern Mongols, and the Uriankhai (*Wuliangha* 兀良哈, *Wulianghai* 烏梁海).

²⁴ Morris Rossabi (1976). “Two Ming Envoys to Inner Asia,” *T’oung Pao* 62, 5.

²⁵ Shen Weirong (2007), “Accommodating Barbarians from Afar: Political and Cultural Interactions between Ming China and Tibet,” *Ming Studies* 1, 37-93. The *Daodejing* quote is on page 44, the endnote on page 86.

to make sense. The Ming founder issued various edicts which emphasised his goal to purify the realm of the “polluting customs” [污染之習] of the Mongols, especially their marriage practices, and trumpeted about “eradicating the barbarian troublemakers’ mutton stench” [驅胡虜之羶腥].²⁶

Yet, Hongwu also admitted how much the Ming owed to the Mongols. He conducted sacrifices for Yuan founder Kublai Khan (r. 1271-1294) whom he called a “man of heaven” [天人] and an admirable dynasty founder.²⁷ As he elaborated, under normal circumstances the Central Realm would “reside in the centre and bring order to the barbarians” [居內以制夷狄] while the latter would “reside outside and offer tribute to the Central Realm” [居外以奉中國]. However:

after the Song throne was overthrown and passed to the Yuan, the northern barbarians entered and ruled the Central Realm. All within and without the four seas surrendered. How could this have been human power [alone]? In fact, it was given to them by Heaven [自宋祚傾移元，以北狄入主中國。四海內外罔不臣服。此豈人力，實乃天授].²⁸

Clearly, the Ming founder did not question the temporary legitimacy of Mongol rule over China: the ‘barbarians’ had gained the Mandate of Heaven (*Tianming* 天命) and lost it again. While early rule was “harmonious” [翕然], later wicked men made careers, until the Yuan “had to collapse and could no longer be saved” [土崩瓦解卒不可救].²⁹ This is not a distinctive statement of any originality but the stereotypical ‘dynastic cycle’ narrative of promising rise and deserved fall, always written by those who toppled the old regime—and as such it seems not to be of great significance. Yet, it is, as it shows that the Yuan, according to Hongwu, did not have to go *because* it had been founded by foreigners. The simple fact that Mongol rule was immediately integrated into the received narratives of legitimacy is important, as it ‘normalised’ the Mongol past. The *Yuanshi* 元史 [*Yuan History*], hurriedly compiled in 1369, officially granted the Mongols their place in the orthodox succession of dynasties.³⁰

²⁶ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Hongwu, *juan* 46, 924; and *juan* 34, 617.

²⁷ Zhu Yuanzhang, *Ming Taizu yuzhi wenji* 明太祖御製文集 [*Collected Writings of the Great Ancestor of the Ming*], *juan* 16; in Timothy H. Barrett (1999), “Qubilai Qa’an and the Historians: Some Remarks on the Position of the Great Khan in Premodern Chinese History,” in *The Mongol Empire and Its Legacy*, ed. Reuven Amitai-Preiss & David Morgan (Leiden), 252; Robinson (2012), “Mongolian Migration,” 109.

²⁸ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Hongwu, *juan* 26, 401; this entry is from 1367. Translation based on Farmer, *Early Ming Legislation*, 1-2; and Serruys, “Remains,” 148-150.

²⁹ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Hongwu, *juan* 15, 211.

³⁰ However, as elaborated in the Introduction, an anti-Mongol bias developed in Ming historiography after the Tumu incident (1449).

Evidently, for early Ming rulers, the throne of the Central Realm could be occupied by someone whose first language was not Chinese and whose ancestors were not Chinese, as long as that person mastered the cultural system.

So far, however, we have not yet left the field of *perceptions*. What about practical politics? Again, the notion of the fiercely anti-Mongol Ming seems justified at first sight. In 1367, for example, the Hongwu administration-in-waiting declared triumphantly their intention to “chase out the barbarian troublemakers” [逐胡虜] so that the “shame of the Central Realm will be washed away” [雪中國之恥]. In the same decree, however, Hongwu proclaimed:

As for Mongols and *Semu* people, although they do not belong to the *Huaxia* (Chinese) descent group, they were born between Heaven and Earth. Those with abilities and knowledge, [who know about] social customs and right conduct, and desire to become our subjects, will be treated (lit. ‘fostered, nourished’) just as the people of Central *Xia* (China) [如蒙古色目，雖非華夏族類，然同生天地之間。有能知禮義願為臣民者，與中夏之人撫養無異].³¹

On 23 September 1368, only a few days after the conquest of Khanbaliq, the new rulers declared again that “as Mongols and *Semu* are living on our soil, they are our subjects (lit. ‘children’). Those who are talented shall be promoted to posts just like [the Chinese]” [蒙古色目人，既居我土，即吾赤子，有才能者，一體擢用].³² As is evident, the Ming allowed Mongols, Central Eurasians, and other ‘non-Chinese’ who had supported the Yuan, to stay within their territory. They explicitly promised to treat them equally to the Chinese, provided that they recognised the new dynasty and brought certain qualifications. Both sources specify that the desired individuals are those with “abilities and knowledge” [能知] or special “talents” [才能], such as linguistic or military skills. These proclamations raise a number of issues.

To begin with, two types of questionable assumptions are easily made here. The first one would be to overlook the instrumentalism behind these decrees and celebrate Ming diversity in an anachronistic way. Terms like ‘multi-ethnic’ and ‘multi-religious’ are generally used to point to the ultimate goal of human equality in difference, a goal early Ming rulers would have hardly endorsed. Empires did not spontaneously embrace diversity. If one emphasises the “multi-faith” and “multi-

³¹ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Hongwu, *juan* 26, 404. The edict is quoted fully in Wu Han 吳晗 (1985 [1943]), *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* 朱元璋傳 [Life of Zhu Yuanzhang] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe), 130-132, a classic of Ming studies.

³² *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Hongwu, *juan* 34, 616.

cultural” aspects of the Ming, one should also clarify that they were a logical consequence of the interests and needs of an imperial administration.³³ While multicultural and multilingual elites were the *conditio sine qua non* of a well-running empire (be it the Ming, the Ottomans, or others), such class solidarity across cultures and languages should be differentiated from modern concepts of tolerance. Thus, it is possibly not precise enough to generally speak of “the religious tolerance and cultural diversity of China in the early fifteenth century.”³⁴ The second questionable assumption, like a mirror image of the first one, would be jumping to the conclusion that the Hongwu regime simply did not have any other option than to integrate the non-Chinese populations inherited from the Yuan, lacking means to expel them. In fact, many examples illustrate that the early Ming state was able to enforce massive population movements. In 1404, it moved 10,000 households north to populate the new capital Beijing. In 1407, it assembled a large body of artisans, 7,000 of them captured in the attack on Vietnam, to work on massive construction projects.³⁵ According to the estimate of Cao Shuji, as many as 11 million people (equalling 15 percent of the entire population, and thus more than its immigrant populations) were relocated in the Hongwu era through forced migration.³⁶ Clearly, the decision *not* to relocate ‘foreign’ populations was not due to a lack of alternatives. While the above-quoted decrees testify chiefly to pragmatism and the early Ming agenda to make the most of the talents of their various subjects, such pragmatism was only possible because some fundamental xenophobic bias did indeed not exist. Loyalty, not ethnicity, was key—an empire with universal claims could hardly work otherwise.

Second, the fact that Hongwu uses the term *Semu* 色目 in his proclamations (and not just *fan* or *Yi* for foreigners) is, on the level of word choice, an excellent example for his engagement with the Mongol legacy and thinking in Mongol categories. *Semu* is an administrative classification invented by the Yuan and means literally ‘[people with] coloured eyes.’ Customarily translated as ‘People of Varied Categories,’ it could as well be rendered simply as ‘Westerners,’ as it basically included anybody west of China proper: Uyghurs, Khitans, Tanguts, Tibetans, Persians, Sogdians, Central Eurasians in general, and so forth. In short, it referred to

³³ Clunas & Harrison-Hall, *Ming*, 11, 272, and passim, emphasise the ‘multi-cultural’ and ‘multi-faith’ Ming.

³⁴ Marsha Haufler (2014), “Beliefs: Miracles and Salvation,” in Clunas & Harrison-Hall, *Ming*, 210.

³⁵ Chan Hok-lam (1988), “The Chien-wen, Yung-lo, Hung-hsi and Hsüan-te reigns,” in Mote & Twitchett, *Cambridge History of China* VIII/1, 238-239.

³⁶ Cao Shuji (1997), *Zhongguo yiminshi* 中國移民史, vol IV: *Ming shiqi* 明時期 [The Ming Period] (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe), 472-473.

the manifold groups on which the Mongols, a minority in their own empire, relied in order to rule the societies they had conquered. While in Yuan social hierarchy, the *Semu* ranked lower than the Mongols but above the Han 漢 (Northern) and the Nan 南 (Southern) people, such hierarchies had always been negotiable through intermarriage or education.³⁷ Michael Brose has demonstrated how multilingual Uyghurs cultivated identities as loyal *Semu*, took public pride in their Central Eurasian heritage, and simultaneously acquired a Confucian education, sometimes gaining excellent reputations as literati.³⁸ Thus, the distinctions between *Semu* and ‘Chinese’ in the early Ming should not be imagined as written in stone. But then, who did Hongwu actually promise to ‘chase out’?

The thought suggests itself that the ‘barbarian troublemakers’ the Ming founder promised to ‘chase out’ were not the Mongols, *Semu* populations, or foreigners as such but mainly those ‘troublemakers’ amongst them who stayed loyal to the Yuan ruling house. Indeed, even members of the Yuan imperial clan were not simply chased out: from the very beginning, the Ming allowed or forced some Mongol princes to live at the capital Nanjing. In 1370, Hongwu wrote a letter to Aiyoushilidala 愛猷識理達臘 (Biligtü Khan Ayushiridara, r. 1370-1378), ruler of the Yuan, and tried to convince him (in Chinese, Mongolian, or bilingual form) to recognise Ming suzerainty and rejoin his wife and son who had been brought to Nanjing as captives.³⁹ After all, the Yuan dynasty did not suddenly cease to exist. That it came to an end after the loss of China in 1368 would be true only from a purely sinocentric perspective, for the successors of Kublai Khan never gave up their dynastic style 大元 (Mong. *Da Öñ*, Chin. *Da Yuan*; ‘Great Yuan’) until they became subjects of the Manchu Qing.⁴⁰ The Great Yuan *ulus* continued to control a great expanse of territory and maintained diplomatic relations from Central Asia to Korea.

³⁷ The term ‘Han,’ in this context, should not be understood as ‘Chinese’ in the modern sense. It referred to former subjects of the ‘foreign’ Jurchen Jin 金 (1115-1234) dynasty in North China in general, including Chinese, Jurchens, and others. See David Morgan (1986), *The Mongols* (Oxford: Blackwell), 127.

³⁸ Brose (2007), *Subjects and Masters*.

³⁹ Letter dated 13 July 1370. See Serruys (1959), *Sino-Mongol Relations* I, 61. Future research might compare this kind of diplomacy to features known from contemporaneous Mediterranean courts, such as the exchange of brides and hostages as a part of cease-fires and peace treaties. See Ana Echevarría (2013), “Trujamanes and Scribes: Interpreting Mediation in Iberian Royal Courts,” in *Cultural Brokers at Mediterranean Courts in the Middle Ages*, ed. Marc Von der Höh et al. (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh), 73-93.

⁴⁰ Okada Hidehiro 岡田英弘 (1994), “Dayan Khan as a Yuan Emperor: The Political Legitimacy in 15th Century Mongolia,” *Bulletin de l’Ecole française d’Extrême-Orient* 81, 51.

While the above-quoted pragmatically ‘liberal’ Hongwu edicts show no sign of racial or ‘nationalist’ xenophobia and should, on the contrary, be seen as expressions of the ‘culturalism’ in early Ming discourse (the idea that *Yi* can be turned into *Hua*), some opposition came from individual literati and officials. When an astronomical irregularity was observed in 1376, the official Zeng Bingzheng 曾秉正 attributed it to uncontrolled barbarians. In a memorial, he uses strong anti-Other rhetoric, essentialising perceived differences between “descent groups” [族類]:

Lately, many Mongols and *Semu* have been adopting *Han* (Chinese) surnames, in no way different from the *Hua* people (Chinese). Some look for an official career and enter the bureaucracy. Some rise to powerful and influential positions. Some become wealthy tradesmen and big merchants. The ancients said: ‘As they are not members of our descent group, their hearts and minds are necessarily different’ [近來蒙古色目之人多改為漢姓，與華人無異。有求仕入官者，有登顯要者，有為富商大賈者。古人曰，非我族類，其心必異].⁴¹

However, that early Ming administrations rejected demands to suppress foreigners and that official tolerance was actually enforced is best seen in the bias of some contemporaries. An example is the author of the *Chuijie lun* 垂戒論 [*Words of Warning*] (1426) who despises early Ming diversity and complains that “even the commoners among the *Semu* are allowed to keep images of [their] god (*Tian* 天) at their homes and pray to them.”⁴² The necessity to defend ‘liberal’ policies can be suspected already from the fact that Hongwu, in 1367, found it necessary to support his pragmatic call for integration with a higher philosophical rationale: that the foreigners in question “were born between Heaven and Earth,” just as the Chinese.⁴³ It is striking that this point is almost identical to one made by the Yongzheng 雍正 emperor (1722-1735) of the Qing who maintained that the ‘barbarian’ *Yi* lived under the same *Tian* (Heaven) as the *Hua* (‘Chinese’) and, consequently, obeyed essentially the same rules. Crossley sees the origin of this argument in the aim of early Manchu rulers to further universalise the Mandate of Heaven into a non-ethnic, purely moral concept: Heaven loved virtue, no matter who displayed it.⁴⁴ Yet, the Ming founder

⁴¹ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Hongwu, *juan* 109, 1815. The irregularity is dated 7 November 1376.

⁴² The author is Li Guangqi 李廣齊, of the lineage that produced the philosopher Li Zhi (1527-1602). Translation Hans Kühner (2001), “‘The Barbarians’ Writing is like Worms, and their Speech is like the Screeching of Owls’: Exclusion and Acculturation in the Early Ming Period,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 151, 424.

⁴³ See the decree quoted at the beginning of this section.

⁴⁴ Pamela Kyle Crossley (2012), “The *Dayi jue mi lu* 大義覺迷錄 and the Lost Yongzheng Philosophy of Identity,” *Crossroads* 5, 63-80.

made a similar argument, only from the other side of the *Hua-Yi* divide. The point is that both Hongwu (professing to speak from the *Hua* side) and Yongzheng (as if answering from the *Yi* side) had an interest to legitimise such a standpoint for their universal empires. We shall further pursue this idea in Chapter Three.

The necessity to defend ‘liberal’ policies can also be inferred from the Yongle emperor’s response to objections made by officials against the employment of ‘barbarians.’ The crux of the matter, Yongle expounds, is not one of ‘foreign’ versus ‘Chinese,’ but one of loyalty, just as the rebellion led by An Lushan 安祿山 (c. 703-756) against the Tang dynasty (618-907) was not caused through An being a foreigner but due to the fact that the emperor chose the wrong man in him.⁴⁵ Similarly, the Song found their end because wicked characters made careers, not because they employed non-Chinese. Thus, “how could anyone say that the end [of the Song] was due to their employment of barbarians” [豈因用夷狄之人致敗]? More recently, Yongle continues, “the barbarian Yuan discriminated between [Mongols and non-Mongols] by employing [only] Mongols and Tartars and excluding northern and southern Chinese, and this precisely led to their ruin” [胡元分別彼此，柄用蒙古韃靼，而外漢人南人，以至滅亡].⁴⁶ In other words: let us emulate the Yuan, but also learn from their mistakes, so as to surpass them. Yongle himself, it should be pointed out, was probably the offspring of a minor wife of Hongwu, the consort Gong 碩, perhaps a Korean—or, as rumour had it, a Mongol. One rumour even suggested that he was in fact the son of the last Yuan emperor himself.⁴⁷ These rumours show, if nothing else, that contemporaries were aware of the ‘Mongol legacy overtones’ manifest in the person of Yongle and his politics.

A large number of immigrants, about whom Yongle and his officials were quarrelling, were Muslims. They were closely associated with Mongol rule and had, as *Semu* people, occupied a higher place than the Chinese. The Mongols had used Muslims, consciously or not, as potential scapegoats by employing them particularly

⁴⁵ The Chinese general An Lushan was of Persian (Sogdian) and Turkish (Göktürk) ancestry, his given name being a transcription of the Sogdian name Rokhshan. His biography in the *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 [*Old Book of Tang*] (*juan* 200 上, 5367) notes that he was a “barbarian of mixed race” [雜種胡人] who “understood six foreign languages” [解六蕃語] and acted as an interpreter in the frontier markets. For his origin, see Edwin G. Pulleyblank (1955), *The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-Shan* (London: Oxford University Press), 7 et seq.

⁴⁶ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Yongle, *juan* 134, 1641-1642. Dated 16 November 1412. Note that *hu Yuan* 胡元 [barbarian Yuan] is a derogatory term. While early Ming sources sometimes use terms like that, in most cases neutral terms are employed, such as *gu Yuan* 故元 [the former Yuan].

⁴⁷ Henry Serruys (1972), “A Manuscript Version of the Legend of the Mongol Ancestry of the Yung-lo Emperor,” *Analecta Mongolica* 8, 19-61.

as money lenders and tax collectors—a role similar to the one forced upon Jews in medieval and early modern Europe—and diverting Chinese animosity from amongst themselves.⁴⁸ Consequently, as Zvi Ben-Dor Benite has shown, many experienced the Yuan-Ming transition as a dangerous moment. “We can still detect in Chinese Muslim memories and family genealogies a whiff of some of the anxieties and uncertainties brought by the Yuan demise. (...) Reasonably, some Muslim families expected a blow from the new regime after the fall of the Yuan.”⁴⁹ But the blow did not come and, quite contrary to such expectations, Ming policies towards Islam were indeed pragmatically tolerant, though there is no evidence that Hongwu was a “patron of Islam,” liked to surround himself with Muslims in particular, or even was a Muslim in disguise, as some want to believe.⁵⁰ While such claims are implausible, they contain—just as the rumour about Yongle’s Mongol ancestry—a grain of truth and could gain credibility only because they are exaggerations of facts but not outright inventions.

In fact, three major mosques, such as the Jingjue Mosque 淨覺寺 in Nanjing, were built with imperial approval under Hongwu. The court employed Muslims in the *Astronomical Bureau* (significant posts in an agricultural society, especially as astronomy was related to imperial legitimacy), while others served as envoys, translators, and interpreters. Some Ming subjects with Muslim background became famous in the Ming as fleet commanders (Zheng He), philosophers (Li Zhi 李贄, 1527-1602), and military men (Chang Yuchun 常遇春, 1330-1369). By allowing the large Muslim communities along the northwestern border to stay, the early Ming court professed its faith in their loyalty and the need of their expertise in foreign languages and horse breeding.⁵¹ A stele in a Xi’an mosque, dated 1407, corroborates these policies by recording that two Muslim *si* 寺 (sacred buildings of ‘orthodox’

⁴⁸ Rossabi (1981), “Muslims in the Early Yüan,” 259.

⁴⁹ Zvi Ben-Dor Benite (2008), “The Marrano Emperor: The Mysterious Intimate Bond between Zhu Yuanzhang and His Muslims,” in *Long Live the Emperor! Uses of the Ming Founder Across Six Centuries of East Asian History*, ed. Sarah Schneewind (Minneapolis: Society for Ming Studies), 299.

⁵⁰ Hajji Yusuf Chang (1988), “The Ming Empire: Patron of Islam in China and Southeast and West Asia,” *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 61, 1-44. Here, Islam emerges as the secret religion of the Ming and Hongwu as a Muslim in disguise, a claim rejected by all eminent historians of Chinese Islam. See Donald Daniel Leslie (1986), *Islam in Traditional China: A Short History to 1800* (Belconnen, A.C.T.: Canberra College of Advanced Education), 105; Jonathan Neaman Lipman (1997), *Familiar Strangers: A History of Muslims in Northwest China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press), 38 note 46. On the problem of identifying historical individuals of the Ming as Muslims, see Lipman (1997), *Familiar Strangers*, 40.

⁵¹ Morris Rossabi (1979), “Muslim and Central Asian Revolts,” in *From Ming to Ch’ing: Conquest, Region, and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century China*, ed. Jonathan D. Spence & John E. Wills (New Haven: Yale University Press), 180-181.

religions) had recently been erected and that Muslims were free to “trade” [買賣] within the empire.⁵² Again, we find pragmatism and common sense, not xenophobia or a wish for revenge. The main aim of the Ming was to stabilise the new dynasty and Muslims, just as Mongols, were a significant group within its immigrant populations.

By means of comparison, features of early Ming policies can be seen even clearer. In some respects, the Yuan-Ming transition resembles the situation in Spain after the conquest of Granada in 1492 and we can call the events of 1368, for the sake of argument, the ‘Chinese Reconquista.’ The Spanish king, immediately after his victory, ordered “the expulsion of all Jews and Jewesses in our kingdom. Never should any of them return and come back. (...) And if they are found living in our kingdoms and domains they should be put to death.”⁵³ No similar edicts have been issued by early Ming rulers against Mongols or other people perceived as foreigners. Compare also the imperially commissioned translations of Persian manuscripts and Mongolian literature into Chinese (to be discussed in following chapters) with cases of organised cultural destruction in Spain shortly after 1492, such as the burning of thousands of Arabic manuscripts in a public square of Granada on the orders of the Archbishop of Toledo.⁵⁴ Thus, compared to the Spanish Reconquista under this aspect, policies of the ‘Chinese Reconquista’ must appear as relatively ‘liberal.’ The early Ming brings to mind the pragmatism and tolerance of early Ottoman rulers, as portrayed by Kołodziejczyk.⁵⁵ Yet, the words ‘liberal’ and ‘tolerance’ must not be used carelessly. True only for specific contexts, such as immigration, they express rather the natural needs of an imperial administration than ideas of general tolerance. While the *late* Ming often served as an ideal for Chinese public intellectuals who wished to demonstrate indigenous potential for liberal developments, the *early* Ming would hardly be a good choice for such endeavours.⁵⁶ Intellectual freedom was increasingly limited and Hongwu’s and Yongle’s systematic purges of civil officials, causing the deaths of tens of thousands together with their friends and family

⁵² A rubbing of the original inscription is reproduced with a translation in Marshall Broomhall (1910), *Islam in China: A Neglected Problem* (London: Morgan & Scott, Ltd.), 91.

⁵³ Expulsion decree of 1492, translated in Jane S. Gerber (1992), *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience* (New York: Free Press), 137.

⁵⁴ G. J. Toomer (1996), *Eastern Wisdom and Learning: The Study of Arabic in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 17.

⁵⁵ Dariusz Kołodziejczyk (2012). “Khan, Caliph, Tsar and Emperor: The Multiple Identities of the Ottoman Sultan,” in Bang & Kołodziejczyk (2012), *Universal Empire*, 175-193.

⁵⁶ Lynn Struve (2011), “Modern China’s Liberal Muse: The Late Ming,” *Ming Studies* 63, 38-68.

members, are well-known.⁵⁷ Wu Bozong, who wrote the preface for the *Heavenly Patterns* translation, was one of the many who lost their lives in the Hongwu purges. The point is, however, that the purges never targeted people perceived as ‘Mongol’ or ‘foreign’ but those suspected of ‘disloyalty.’⁵⁸ Put bluntly, that the main dividing line did not run between ‘Chinese’ and ‘non-Chinese’ is true for purges as well as for careers. The next section will focus on such careers in the realm of language mediation.

3. Immigrants as translators

As shown above, early Ming edicts explicitly allowed Mongols, *Semu* people, and other foreigners to stay, as long as they contributed special talents. But how can we be certain that pragmatically tolerant edicts were actually translated into reality and not just paperwork? Not only do the ‘defensive’ arguments of both Hongwu and Yongle suggest that edicts were meant to be enforced, Serruys has provided various concrete examples of ‘non-Chinese’ in Ming military and imperial bodyguard service.⁵⁹ This section looks at another group, equally important as soldiers for the early Ming, but less visible and less well researched: translators and interpreters. It will show that one of the above-mentioned special “talents” [才能] was language competence and that the early Ming were mostly reliant on ‘non-Chinese’ to acquire it, many of them inherited from the Mongol era.

One methodological problem arises immediately: how can we know that a certain translator was of non-Chinese descent? And what do we mean by ‘non-Chinese’? To be sure, names are not an absolute criterion.⁶⁰ Individuals with ‘Mongol migration background’ could have flawless Chinese names. If the Ming *Veritable Records* did not mention explicitly that the high official Gao Chang’an 高昌安 was a “Mongol” [蒙古人] from the “former Yuan” [故元], it would be impossible to

⁵⁷ Under Yongle, free interpretations of classical (‘Confucian’) texts were less and less tolerated. See Dardess (2013), *Resilient Empire*, 88. Regarding the early Ming purges, Dardess rightly warns against focusing overly on Hongwu’s or Yongle’s personality and psychology. In (1983), *Confucianism and Autocracy: Professional Elites in the Founding of the Ming Dynasty* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 179, he argues that a large group of early Ming intellectuals were “united by a ‘professional’ desire to expurge evil,” legitimising state-controlled violence.

⁵⁸ The most thorough study of the Hongwu purges remains Thomas Pierce Massey (1983), “Chu Yüan-Chang and the Hu-Lan cases of the early Ming Dynasty,” PhD Thesis, University of Michigan.

⁵⁹ Serruys (1961), “Foreigners in the Metropolitan Police.”

⁶⁰ Early Ming ‘name policies’ will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

know.⁶¹ Mongolian names had become very popular with Jurchens and Turks, and to a certain degree also with the Chinese. Mongols themselves frequently had Turkish names, sometimes Islamic or Chinese names.⁶² Some foreigners—Muslims in particular—decided to adopt Chinese names in order to avoid association with the Mongol-ruled dynasty that had just been overthrown.⁶³ Others did not make such a choice, as the names of several early Ming translators will show. Then again, some translators held foreign and Chinese names simultaneously. Thus, we might encounter a translator with a foreign name and another one with a Chinese name—without realising that both are one and the same person.⁶⁴

Despite these difficulties, it seems hard to come up with a better method than focusing on translators' names, as they are often our only clue. Furthermore, while some foreigners in the early Ming adopted Chinese names and might thus 'distort the statistics,' it is unlikely that early Ming Chinese would suddenly *en masse* adopt Mongolian or Islamic names. Thus, while a person named Guo Chongli is not *necessarily* of Chinese descent, the Arabic, Persian, and Mongolian names must indeed point to 'Mongol migration background' or foreigners in general. My research has pinned down the names of twenty-four individuals involved in the translation activities that have been chosen as representative for early Ming language policy (see introduction). Appendix E is the basis for the prosopographical approach of this section: investigating common characteristics of a specific historical group whose individual biographies are fragments at best. It lists people alphabetically for convenience and according to what I see as the four main early Ming translation environments: creating basic tools (glossaries), enabling diplomatic communication, producing multilingual edicts and inscriptions, and translating non-Chinese literature. While name origins in Appendix E, at first glance, do not seem to lean massively towards the non-Chinese side (fifteen 'foreign' and nine 'Chinese' names), several of the Chinese involved were 'monolingual translators,' a curiosity which Chapter Five will discuss. Therefore, Table 1 compares bilinguals with foreign names to bilinguals with Chinese names. A proportion of ten bilingual 'foreigners' (involved in various

⁶¹ See *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Hongwu, *juan* 202, 3031; an entry of the year 1390.

⁶² Serruys (1959), *Sino-Mongol Relations* I, 10.

⁶³ Benite (2008), "Marrano Emperor," 300.

⁶⁴ A similar problem is the fact that we will be dealing with non-Chinese names in Chinese transcription and thus the possibility of many variants must be borne in mind. For example, for the Yuan-era astronomer Zhamaluding 扎馬魯丁 (Jamāl al-Dīn), there exist at least two more variants of "Zhamaluding" (扎瑪魯鼎 and 札馬魯丁) and even a variant form of phonetic transcription, namely "Zhamalading" in at least three variants (札馬刺丁, 扎馬刺丁, and 紫馬刺丁).

translation activities) versus three bilingual ‘Chinese’ (all members of Zheng He’s crew) results:

Table 1 Early Ming bilingual ‘foreigners’ versus bilingual ‘Chinese’

(I) Bilingual foreigners or sons of immigrants	(II) Bilingual Chinese
1. Adawuding 阿答兀丁 (fl. 1382-1383)	1. Ma Huan 馬歡 (ca. 1380-1460)
2. Alubuhua 阿魯不花 (fl. 1413)	2. Guo Chongli 郭崇礼 (fl. 1413-1433)
3. Bo’arxintai 白阿兒忻台 (fl. 1407)	3. Fei Xin 費信 (ca. 1385-1436)
4. Gonggesuonan 貢哥瑣南 (fl. 1370)	
5. Haydar 海達兒 (fl. 1368-1383)	
6. Hasan 哈三 (fl. 1413-1415)	
7. Khoninchi or Huo Yuanjie 火原潔 (fl. 1382-1389)	
8. Muḥammad or Ma Hama 馬哈麻 (fl. 1382-1389)	
9. Muḥammad or Mahama 馬哈麻 (fl. 1371)	
10. Ma Shayihe 馬沙亦黑 (fl. 1382-c.1389)	
11. Yishiha 亦失哈 (fl. 1409-1451)	

The fact that translators in early Ming China were, more often than not, of foreign descent (Table 1) is significant, as it often indicates a ‘Mongol migration background’ and adds biographical dimensions to the Mongol legacy analysed above. We shall have a closer look at some individuals listed in Table 1. Khoninchi will be the starting point, as he is one of the main actors in the first ‘major translation event’ of the Ming, the compilation of the Mongolian-Chinese glossary *Sino-Barbarian Translations* (1389).⁶⁵ The only passage in Liu Sanwu’s glossary preface relating directly to Khoninchi as a person is illuminating: “The official Khoninchi, Expositor-in-waiting at the *Hanlin Academy*, stems from the desert people and was born in *Huaxia*” [翰林侍講臣火源潔乃朔漠之族，生於華夏].⁶⁶ In other words, born in China proper (probably in the late Yuan), Khoninchi was of Mongol descent. Liu introduces Khoninchi as a great bilingual scholar and cultural hero of translation: “in the literature of his own [Mongolian] tradition, few can compare to him. He devotes himself to studying the *Four Books* of the Central Realm and has brilliantly understood the meaning of them all” [本俗之文，與肩者罕。志通中國四書。咸明

⁶⁵ Huo Yuanjie 火原潔 is the sinicised form of his Mongolian name Khoninchi. See Roy Andrew Miller (1966), “Qoninči, Compiler of the Hua-i i-yü of 1389,” *Ural-Altische Jahrbücher* 38, 112-121.

⁶⁶ Liu (1971 [1389]), *Preface to the Chinese-Barbarian Translations*, 2.

其意]. Hence, his upbringing provided him with deep conversance in Chinese and Mongolian culture *and* language—both spoken *and* written. In modern linguistic theory, Khoninchi could be called a ‘balanced bilingual.’⁶⁷

While it is hard to say whether Khoninchi was the son of recent Mongol immigrants or of ‘long-established’ Mongols, it is clear that, in other cases, personnel with bilingual competence were directly carried over from the Yuan. The *Islamic Astronomical Bureau*, or *Huihui Sitianjian* 回回司天監, is an example of a typical Mongol innovation that was inherited by the Ming: founded in 1271 under Kublai, it had enabled Muslim (*Huihui*) and *Semu* people to achieve positions traditionally held by the Chinese.⁶⁸ The fact that it did not substitute its Chinese counterpart but operated parallel to it illustrates how the Mongol Yuan were keen on making the most of the talents of their various subjects, just as their Ming successors. As historian Zheng Xiao 鄭曉 (1499-1566) noted, the Hongwu court recruited in 1368:

the *Islamic Astronomical Bureau* [officials] Heidi’er (Ḥaydar) and Adula (‘Abdullāh), the *Bureau* deputy Dieliyueshi (Darwish?), [and others, altogether] fourteen persons. In the second year [of Hongwu (1369), the court] also recruited the Yuan-era Muslim calendar officials Zheng Ali and others, [altogether] eleven persons. They arrived at the capital (Nanjing), discussed mathematical astronomy and observed heavenly phenomena [回回司天監黑的兒、阿都刺，司天監丞迭里月實十四人，二年又徵元回回曆官鄭阿里等十一人至京，議曆法，占天象].⁶⁹

From this record, it is clear that the Hongwu administration immediately recruited at least twenty-five foreign specialists of astronomy. This illustrates at an individual level what has been shown above for the level of administration at large: policies were not xenophobic but pragmatic, the Ming were bound to channel the talents of their diverse subjects into their institutions. At least one *Islamic Astronomical Bureau* employee taken over by the Ming, going by the Arabic-Persian name Ḥaydar (Heidi’er 黑的兒⁷⁰, Arab. ‘lion’), made his career in the Ming state. Fifteen years later, in 1383, Ḥaydar held the post of ‘Gentleman-attendant of the Imperial

⁶⁷ Mullen (2012), “Multiple Languages,” 15.

⁶⁸ On the *Islamic Astronomical Bureau*, see Benno van Dalen (2002), “Islamic and Chinese Astronomy under the Mongols: A Little Known Case of Transmission,” in *From China to Paris. 2000 Years Transmission of Mathematical Ideas*, ed. Yvonne Dold-Samplonius et al. (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner), 327-356; Park (2012), *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds*, 98-99.

⁶⁹ Zheng Xiao 鄭曉 (1566), *Jinyan* 今言 [*Contemporary Words*], *juan* 1, 56. See also *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Hongwu, *juan* 41, 817; *Ming History*, *juan* 31, 516, “History of the Calendar” [曆法沿革]. The name Adula 阿都刺 is given in some sources as Aduci 阿都刺, which must be a sinographical mix-up, *la* 刺 and *ci* 刺 being almost identical.

⁷⁰ In other sources, he appears as Haida’er 海達兒.

Observatory’ [欽天監靈臺郎] and participated in the Persian-to-Chinese translation *Heavenly Patterns*, a treatise inherited through the Yuan imperial library. We may hypothesise that after the end of the Yuan a great number of *Islamic Astronomical Bureau* staff continued their work under the new rulers; certainly many more acted as language mediators. In any event, just as Khoninchi was a native speaker of the language being translated into Chinese through the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* (Mongolian), the pivotal translators in the *Heavenly Patterns* case were speakers of the source language, Persian: Ḥaydar, Ma Shayihei 馬沙亦黑 (Sheikh Ma?), Muḥammad 馬哈麻, and Adawuding 阿答兀丁 (possibly Alā-ud-dīn علاءالدین).⁷¹ Clearly, the early Ming were dependent on foreign talent for translation work.

Similarly, the early Ming often employed as envoys-cum-interpreters natives from the very country to which they were sending an embassy. The *Veritable Records* note that in 1370 an interpreter with the name Gonggesuonan 貢哥瑣南 (possibly Mong. Güngge Sonam) was sent to the Western Regions, followed, in 1371, by an interpreter named Mahama 馬哈麻 (Muḥammad). The bilingual diplomatic letters of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* name several Mongol messengers sent to the Mongols on behalf of the Ming.⁷² This worked just as well the other way around. As Chan Hok-lam has shown, former Ming subjects who had emigrated to neighbouring countries, so-called ‘Chinese-barbarian officials’ [華人夷官, literally ‘Yi officials of *Hua* descent’], regularly served as translators for them during missions to the Ming court.⁷³ The Korean envoy Sōl Changsu 僣長壽 (1341-1399), who personally conversed with the Ming founder, illustrates how useful a ‘Mongol migration background’ could be when it came to language skills: Sōl was not a native Korean but a non-Chinese immigrant from Yuan China, whose family had been classified *Semu*. Belonging to a famous Uyghur lineage of career bureaucrats, the Gaochang Xie 高昌僣, one branch of his family settled in Korea and became noted for their fluency in both Mongolian and Chinese.⁷⁴ While we can reasonably assume that most

⁷¹ Wu (1996 [1383]), *Preface to the Heavenly Patterns*, 2.

⁷² Haenisch (1952), *Sino-mongolische Dokumente*, 9-17.

⁷³ Chan Hok-lam (1968), “The ‘Chinese Barbarian Officials’ in the Foreign Tributary Missions to China During the Ming Dynasty,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88, 411-418; and (2012, posthumous), “Huaren yiguan: Mingdai waifan Huaji gong shi kaoshu 華人夷官: 明代外蕃華籍貢使考述 [‘Chinese Barbarian Officials’: Ming-Era Chinese as Tributary Officials Abroad],” *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiusuo xuebao* 中國文化研究所學報 54, 29-67.

⁷⁴ Wang Sixiang 王思翔 (2014), “The Sounds of Our Country: Interpreters, Linguistic Knowledge, and the Politics of Language in Early Chosŏn Korea,” in *Rethinking East Asian Languages, Vernaculars, and Literacies, 1000-1919*, ed. Benjamin A. Elman (Leiden: Brill), 67.

above-discussed people did not undergo any formal translation training, there was no force involved either. Immigrants offered to serve as interpreters on their own accord.

Other methods of seeking bilingual personnel were less friendly. Consider the case of the Jurchen-language interpreter Yishiha. The sources reveal that he was a Jurchen himself, stemming from the Haixi 海西 borderlands, who was captured by the Ming army in 1395.⁷⁵ Subsequently castrated and brought to the court in Nanjing, Yishiha probably learned Chinese in the imperial harem to which he was assigned as a eunuch-official, a biography similar to that of Zheng He. Both men were captured foreigners made eunuchs. “Zheng He, the mighty Ming dynasty mariner of our nation” [我國明代偉大航海家鄭和]⁷⁶, was like Yishiha not born in China but at the fringes of the empire. Possibly a descendant of Sayyid Ajall Shams al-Dīn (1211-1279), a Muslim from Bukhara whom Kublai Khan had appointed governor of Yunnan in 1274, Zheng He was born in Yunnan a good century later (1371), where he lived until he reached the age of twenty and was captured by invading Ming troops.⁷⁷ It is thus well possible that his native language was, like Yishiha’s, not a Chinese speech variety: as Chapter Two will show, Yunnan’s languages had their own department in the *Bureau of Translators*. Given Zheng He’s Muslim background, it is also conceivable that some knowledge of Arabic or Persian was transmitted in his family.⁷⁸ In general, the Central Eurasian, Jurchen, Vietnamese, Korean and Chinese eunuchs employed by the Yongle emperor must have brought language and cultural competence into the court. Korean-born eunuchs were incorporated into the Ming imperial staff and sent as envoys to their native country.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Haixi is today part of the PRC and comprises the provinces Inner Mongolia, Liaoning, Heilongjiang, and Jilin. On Yishiha, see Rossabi (1976), “Ming Envoys.”

⁷⁶ Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 中國社會科學院 (2005), *Shijie jingji nianjian* 世界经济年鉴 [Annual Report on the Global Economy], 516. Exactly the same nationalist catchphrase, or very similar ones, are to be found in many works since ca. 1980, especially around the year 2005 which marks the 600th anniversary of the first expedition.

⁷⁷ Although Dreyer (2006), *Zheng He*, 1-2, presents the Sayyid Ajall Shams al-Dīn (Sai Dianchi 賽典赤) lineage as a fact, the question is actually contested. See Chang Xiaojun 常小軍 (2007), “Sai Dianchi yanjiu shuping 賽典赤研究述評 [A Review of the Studies on Sai Dianchi],” MA Thesis, Lanzhou University.

⁷⁸ According to the *Gu Ma gong muzhiming* 故馬公墓誌銘 [Epitaph for the late Honourable Ma] (1411), composed by Li Zhigang 李至剛, Minister of Rites, Zheng He’s father and grandfather were both named *Hazhi* 哈之, i.e. Hajji, suggesting that they had made the pilgrimage (*Haji*) to Mecca.

⁷⁹ Shih-shan Henry Tsai (1996), *The Eunuchs in the Ming Dynasty* (New York: State University of New York Press), 135-140; Chan Hok-lam 陳學霖 (1999), “Mingchu Chaoxian ‘ruchao’ huanguan juyu: Hae Su shiji tansuo 明初朝鮮《入朝》宦官舉隅：海壽事蹟探索 [Illuminating the Case of One of the Korean Eunuchs Who Were Sent to China in the Early Ming: An Exploration of the Achievements of Hae Su],” *Gugong xueshu jikan* 故宮學術季刊 16, 57-93.

Just as Zheng He, Yishiha made a career in the Ming state and became the leader of an armed embassy. His fleet of 25 ships and 1000 men sailed down the Amur river into Jurchen territory for the first time in 1411, with more expeditions to follow. The Yongning Trilingual Stele he erected in the borderlands provides further evidence of foreign-descent personnel, as it records the names of embassy members, with many of Mongol and Jurchen origin. Some Mongols and Jurchens are identified as men from Anle and Zizai, the two communities created for Jurchen immigrants by the Ming in 1408, as discussed above. There is even a short section on those who “composed the stele inscriptions” [撰碑記].⁸⁰ A Mongol named Alubuhua 阿魯不花 translated the Chinese text into Mongol. A Jurchen from Liaodong produced the Jurchen text. In 1407, a Central Eurasian named Bo’arxintai 白阿兒忻台 was made leader of an embassy to Samarkand, capital of the Timurid empire (1370-1507): yet another example of the Ming court’s employment of non-Chinese. Bo’arxintai was clearly not just envoy but also interpreter, as he is sent with a complex message, to be delivered to local rulers Hali 哈里 and Halie 哈烈 in Persian, Chagatai Turkic, or Arabic, the three major Timurid languages.⁸¹ Correspondingly, the early Ming *Bureau of Translators* must have been staffed mainly by non-Chinese. Director Wang Zongzai recalls that “at the time of the foundation of this institute, the [language] instructors came mostly from abroad, drafted by the court.”⁸² That these recruitment practices did not change over time is suggested by the Ming’s *Collected Statutes* which note that in 1579, “the *Xianluo* [Thai] department was established and people native to that country [inhabitants of the Ayutthaya Kingdom, 1351-1767] were selected as [language] instructors” [設暹羅館，取本國人為教師].⁸³

The evidence shows that the above-quoted Hongwu edicts, allowing Mongols, *Semu* people, and foreigners in general to stay in Ming territory, were not just paperwork. One career field for skilled foreigners with or without ‘Mongol migration background’ was translation services. The early Ming state depended on them, as there were not enough multilingual Chinese. We shall take one of the many examples from this section as a case study and further narrow the focus: what, on the micro level, can we know about ‘translators as people’ in the early Ming?

⁸⁰ Yang Hongyou 杨洪友 & Yang Yang 杨洋 (2008), *Mingdai Dongbei jiangyu yanjiu* 明代东北疆域研究 [*The Northeastern Borderlands in the Ming Dynasty*] (Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe), 93.

⁸¹ *Ming History*, *juan* 332, 8610. The names might be Persian, Turkic, Arabic, or even Mongolian.

⁸² Wang (1580), *Inspection*, following Devéria’s (1896) translation in “Histoire du Collège des Interprètes”, 98: “lors de la fondation de cette institution, les professeurs venaient pour la plupart de l’étranger, appelés par le Cour.”

⁸³ *Da Ming huidian* 大明會典 [*Collected Statutes of the Great Ming*] (1587), *juan* 221, 2943-2.

4. The Ma family translators as a case study

The prosopographical perspective of the last section clarified two larger features of the early Ming situation. First, the court employed mainly ‘non-Chinese’ for translation jobs. Second, applicants for such jobs were numerous, due to Mongol-era migration. Can we gain further insights into these translators as historical persons? For this ultimate narrowing down of the focus, Ma Shayihe and Ma Hama will serve as a case study, because—in contrast to the majority of early Ming translators whom we know only by name—they appear not only in court-produced historiography but also in two family genealogies, the *Nanjing Scroll* and the *Ma Genealogy*. What is the significance of life histories of translators, even if fragmentary? First of all, they substantiate more abstract examinations of the Mongol legacy, enriching them with glimpses of individual experience. Moreover, as elaborated in the introduction, translation history needs to make greater room for “translators as people.”⁸⁴ Texts cannot make history, only humans can: thus, institutions such as the *Bureau of Translators* would exist only on paper unless there were qualified individuals to make them a reality. Thus, the scraps we can grasp are better than nothing. In particular, I will show that while sources often contradict each other, and while some assertions in the genealogical material are clearly legendary, even the legends point to significant truths about the Mongol heritage.

Ma Shayihe and Ma Hama are two pivotal translators in the *Book on Heavenly Patterns* project of the 1380s, a translation of astronomical treatises from Persian into Chinese. First of all, a misunderstanding related to their names must be addressed. Pelliot thought that *Mashayiheimahama* 馬沙亦黑馬哈麻 in the sources referred to one person; from him the rumour spread to Crossley and Allsen.⁸⁵ Yet, the genealogical material and other sources show that *Mashayiheimahama* must be divided by two: Ma Shayihe is one person and Ma Hama his younger brother; Ma is their family name.⁸⁶ That they were not of Chinese descent is made explicit by all sources. The sources disagree, however, as to where exactly the Mas came from. No less than four different places are named: ‘Lumi,’ Samarkand, Mecca, and Medina. A

⁸⁴ Pym (1998), *Method in Translation History*, 36.

⁸⁵ Pelliot (1948), “Sseu-yi-kouan,” 232: “son nom complet était 馬沙亦黑馬哈麻, Ma-cha-yi-hei Ma-ha-ma.” Crossley (1991), “Structure and Symbol”; Allsen (2001), “Rasûlid Hexaglot.”

⁸⁶ Even without the genealogical material, this could easily be established based on grammar and word choice of the Chinese primary sources. Wu Bozong’s preface notes that major translators included “*the official* [臣] Ma Shayihe, *the official* [臣] Ma Hama, and others” [臣馬沙亦黑臣馬哈麻等]. The character *chen* 臣 ‘official’ always precedes a separate name, thus we definitely deal with two separate persons.

shared property is that they all belong to the Western Regions in the historical Chinese understanding of the term. The *Nanjing Scroll* states that Ma Deluding 馬得魯丁, father of the translators Ma Shayihe and Ma Hama, “came from the country of Lumi in the Western Regions” [西域魯密國人], which is not a common Chinese name for any polity. While the *Ming History* has an entry on a place called Lumi 魯迷 (probably identical with the Lumi 魯密 of the scroll), it does not clarify its whereabouts, we only learn that it is “extremely far away from the Central Realm” [去中國絕遠] and that, in 1524, its ruler “sent envoys who presented lions and western bulls” [遣使貢獅子、西牛].⁸⁷ Curiously, the Yongle-era envoy Chen Cheng, who travelled extensively in the Western Regions, does not mention any Lumi.⁸⁸ Possibly Lumi would have laid too far west of his route: I suggest that 魯密, in *pinyin* transcription ‘Lumi,’ should be transcribed ‘Rumi’⁸⁹ and refers to *Rūm* in the sense of Arabic *Bilād al-Rūm*, ‘the country of the Romans,’ the *Eastern* Roman empire (ca. 330-1453).⁹⁰ The ‘Rumi version’ would then indicate that Ma Shayihe came from somewhere in geographical Turkey.

A late Qing text of Chinese Muslim scholarship, on the other hand, claims that “Wu Liang of the Ming, whose original name was Ma Shayihe, was a man from the country of Samarkand” [明吳諒，原名馬沙亦黑，撒馬爾罕國人也].⁹¹ As early Ming China received plenty of embassies from Timurid-ruled Samarkand, twenty in the Yongle period alone, it is well conceivable that the Ma family was among them. Moreover, the Persian historian ‘Aṭā-Malik Juvainī (1226-1283) reports in his history of the Mongol era that thirty thousand Muslim craftsmen from Samarkand were distributed among Genghis Khan’s entourage, and many of them eventually ended up in Mongolia or North China.⁹² Was Ma Deluding a descendant of one of them? In this scenario, it would just be puzzling that neither the *Ma Genealogy* nor the *Nanjing*

⁸⁷ *Ming History*, juan 332, 8626, in *Xiyu zhuan* 西域傳 [Commentaries on the Western Regions].

⁸⁸ Chen Cheng 陳誠 (1991 [1415]), *Xiyu xingcheng ji & Xiyu fanguo zhi* 西域行程記 & 西域番國志 [‘Record of a Journey to the Western Regions’ & ‘Report about the Countries of the Western Regions’], ed. Zhonghua shuju, introduction Wang Jiguang 王繼光.

⁸⁹ Frequently, /t/ sounds in non-Chinese place names are (and have been) transcribed through /l/ sounds. Luoma 羅馬 as the Chinese name for the Italian capital is probably the best known example.

⁹⁰ Sami Zubaida (2011), *Beyond Islam: A New Understanding of the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris), 118.

⁹¹ Tang Zhuanyou’s 唐傳猷 *Qingzhen shiyi buji* 清真釋疑補輯 [Addendum to ‘Resolving the Doubts about Islam’] (ca. 1880-1893), in Ma & Chen (1996), *Zhongguo huihui lifa*, 1027. See Benite (2008), “Marrano Emperor,” 292.

⁹² ‘Aṭā-Malik Juvainī (author) & John Andrew Boyle (translator) (1997 [1259]), *The History of the World Conqueror [Tārīkh-i Jahāngushāy]* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 115-123. See also Rossabi (1981), “Muslims in the Early Yüan,” 263.

Scroll recognise their ancestor as a man from Samarkand. The *Ma Genealogy* itself asserts that in 1368:

imperial envoys were sent to the government [of the city of] Mankai in Arabia. [They] offered posts [in China] to the [local] experts in astronomy. Eventually, [they] engaged a scholar of the Gulai family [from the] Zhundai area, namely the Honourable Deluding of our family, courtesy name Yanming, who [subsequently] came to China [派欽使到阿拉伯滿凱政府，聘請精於曆學專家，乃聘到準帶地方古來氏族學者，即我來華氏族德魯丁公字彥明者].⁹³

Mankai 滿凱 is, again, an unusual place name, unknown to other sources. The context suggests that it is a non-standard transcription of Mecca.⁹⁴ If so, Zhundai 準帶—equally unusual—is probably Jeddah on the Red Sea coast, throughout history the principal gateway to Mecca. The assertion that Hongwu sent a mission as far as the Arabian Peninsula in the first year of his reign in order to actively search for talent abroad is, given the political turmoils of the time, not easy to believe, and might well result from the desire of the genealogy editors to let the deeds of their ancestor shine as brightly as possible. Ma Deluding travelling down many a dusty mile to China for whatever reason and being rewarded with a promising job in the Hongwu administration is admirable enough. Ma appears even greater though if we believe that the causality worked the other way around, with Hongwu combing the world for talents and finding the Honourable Ma in the Far West.

We should not rule out, however, that the ‘Mecca version’ of Ma Shayihe’s provenance is actually true. There are parallel cases for Buddhist translators being sought by rulers. One Western Regions scholar, the famous Kumarajiva 鳩摩羅什 (334-413), was kidnapped by Chinese troops and learned the Central Realm language in imprisonment before becoming a prolific sutra translator in Chang’an.⁹⁵ Moreover, as this chapter has shown, the Ming founder recruited able men in order to consolidate his power, no matter where they came from. He also did send envoys to various countries in 1369, announcing his victory over the Mongols, so it seems not

⁹³ *Ma Genealogy*, in Ma & Chen (1996), *Zhongguo huihui lifa*, 1025. See also my translations of both genealogies in Appendix A.

⁹⁴ Contemporary sources usually render Mecca phonetically as Mojia 默伽 or Majia 麻嘉, or refer to it as *Tianfang* 天方 (Heavenly Square), *Tianfang* 天房 (Heavenly House)—used by Ma Huan—, or *Tiantang* 天堂 (Paradise). See Feng Chengjun 馮承鈞 (1982), *Xiyu diming* 西域地名 [*Toponyms of the Western Regions*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju).

⁹⁵ It should at least be considered to what extent the authors of the *Ma Genealogy* knew about parallel cases in Buddhist translation history and used them as models. On Kumarajiva, see Martha P. Y. Cheung (2006), *An Anthology of Chinese Discourse on Translation*, vol. 1: *From Earliest Times to the Buddhist Project* (Manchester: St Jerome), 93.

completely out of the question that some envoys travelled very far to the west and recruited personnel for the Ming *en route*.⁹⁶ That the Ma Genealogy explicitly mentions the year 1369 as the year of arrival in China is striking in this context. Significantly, the *Ming History* version of the *Islamic Astronomy* states that the translator Ma Hama was the king or prince (*wang*) of Modina 默狄納, which clearly refers to Medina.⁹⁷ This lends further credence to the claims in the genealogical material about the Mas immigrating from ‘Arabia.’

But should not the authors of the family genealogies know best? Why should we approach them so shyly? Genealogies are problematic for various reasons. They usually attempt to emulate a social ideal and tend to record selectively what agrees with accepted standards.⁹⁸ As Michael Szonyi has shown, manipulating genealogies was a common practice in the late Ming and early Qing in order to strengthen the status of families.⁹⁹ Details were often inserted later and should be used with care. The provenance of the Ma material is equally hazy. The *Ma Genealogy* in its present form was compiled, based on earlier texts, in Republican China (1912-1949) by fifteenth generation descendant Ma Liang 馬良 (1875-1947).¹⁰⁰ Different parts of the texts seem to have been composed at different times, including the mid-Ming, Qing, and early Republic.¹⁰¹ In spite of such complications, the two genealogies have not

⁹⁶ Wang Gungwu 王康武 (1998), “Ming Foreign Relations: Southeast Asia,” in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. VIII: *The Ming Dynasty 1368–1644*, pt. 2, ed. Denis Twitchett & Frederick W. Mote (Cambridge), 304.

⁹⁷ *Mingshi Huihui lifa* 明史回回曆法 [*Islamic System of Mathematical Astronomy*], taken from the *Ming History*, in Ma & Chen, *Zhongguo huihui lifa*, 888.

⁹⁸ Johanna M. Meskill (1970), “The Chinese Genealogy as a Research Source,” in *Family and Kinship in Chinese Society*, eds. Ai-li S. Chin & Maurice Freedman (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 139-162; Zhao Zhongwei (2001), “Chinese Genealogies as a Source for Demographic Research: A Further Assessment of Their Reliability and Biases,” *Population Studies* 55.

⁹⁹ Michael Szonyi (2002), *Practicing Kinship: Lineage and Descent in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press).

¹⁰⁰ Chen Jiujin 陳久金 (1989), “Ma Deluding fu zi he huihui tianwenxue 馬德魯丁父子和回回天文學 [Ma Deluding, his Sons, and Islamic Astronomy],” *Ziran kexueshi yanjiu* 自然科學史研究 8, 28-36.

¹⁰¹ The *Ma Genealogy* names a “Ma Hasan, ancestor from the third generation” [三世祖馬哈三] and a “Ma Luan, ancestor from the fifth generation” [五世祖馬鸞], apparently authors of the oldest layers of material, which would then coincide with the mid-Ming. The *Ma Genealogy* uses the typical Ming term for the *Bureau of Translators*, namely *Siyi guan* 四夷館 ‘Hall for all Barbarians,’ while the *Nanjing Scroll* uses the revised Qing term, *Siyi guan* 四譯館 ‘Hall for all Translations.’ For the *Nanjing Scroll*, the phrase “in the former Ming” [前明] suggests that the text (or at least this fragment of it) was written in the Qing. See *Ma Genealogy* and *Nanjing Scroll*, in Ma & Chen (1996), *Zhongguo huihui lifa*, 1025-1027, and my translations of both genealogies in Appendix A.

always been used with the necessary source-critical awareness.¹⁰² The opinion of Chen Jiujin 陳久金, a leading scholar on Islamic astronomy in China, that “what the Ma family genealogy records should be relatively reliable” [馬氏宗譜所載應是較為可靠的], seems too optimistic.¹⁰³ An extreme case is Isa Ma Ziliang who generally treats Chinese Muslim genealogies like revealed truth and then triumphs that now “Chinese history has to be rewritten.”¹⁰⁴ Conversely, Benite’s ideology-critical approach in which genealogies almost appear as pure fiction risks to miss historical truths behind them.¹⁰⁵ Finding a middle way between these opposite approaches seems wise, as the following examples will illustrate.

The *Ma Genealogy* claims that the Ming founder himself bestowed the surname Ma 馬 upon the family, in memory of the maiden name of his wife and empress Ma (1332-1382), but this cannot be taken at face value. Not only was Hongwu, at least in theory, opposed to the sinicisation of foreign names, as Chapter Four will show, but Ma is also in no sense a special name. Rather, it is an archetypical surname of foreigners, often (though not always) indicating a Muslim background, “parce qu’il ressemble à la première syllabe du nom même de Muḥammad ‘Mahomet’”¹⁰⁶ Zheng He was born into a family named Ma, just as his Muslim translator Ma Huan and many others. To give another example, Ma Shaiyihai certainly had some post at or connection with the *Astronomical Bureau*, but it is unlikely that he was its director, as both genealogies maintain. If he was, why do contemporary sources not mention this fact, particularly Wu Bozong who diligently lists the precise titles of other officials? Clearly legendary is the *Ma Genealogy*’s claim that Hongwu “made the eldest son of our family, the Honourable [Ma] Shaiyihai (...) his son-in-law and the husband of his thirteenth princess” [以我族長子沙亦黑公 (...), 招為駙馬, 賜配十三公主], as the Ming founder’s tenth and thirteenth daughters died so young that not even their names are recorded.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Both texts were located in the 1980s by Chen Jiujin. The *Nanjing Scroll* is a *guazhou* 掛軸 or ‘hanging scroll’ that once belonged to the ‘Hall of the Great Observer Ma’ [大測堂馬], the old ancestral hall of the Ma family which does not exist any more. Chen reports that the scroll was provided to him by a Yang Yi 楊毅, affiliated to the *Nanjingshi Isilanjiao Xiehui* 南京市伊斯蘭教協會 [Nanjing Islamic Association]. See Chen (1989), “Ma Deluding,” 29 note 1.

¹⁰³ Chen (1989), “Ma Deluding,” 33.

¹⁰⁴ Ma Isa Ziliang (2008), “Islamic Astronomy in China: Spread and Development” [ICS Working Paper No. 2008-4], <http://ics.um.edu.my/images/ics/workingpaper/2008-4.pdf> (University of Malaya), 1, accessed 13 January 2014.

¹⁰⁵ Benite, “Marrano Emperor.”

¹⁰⁶ Pelliot (1935), “Notes additionnelles,” 277.

¹⁰⁷ *Ma Genealogy*, in Ma & Chen (1996), *Zhongguo huihui lifa*, 1026.

Apart from such problematic assertions of the *Ma Genealogy*, there is another reason to tread warily here. Benite's work reveals peculiar similarities between the genealogical material relating to the translators Ma Shayihe and Ma Hama and other Chinese Muslim genealogies and writings, in which Muslim immigrants serving as astronomers at the early Ming court are a recurring topos. The Nanjing scholar Wang Daiyu 王袋輿 (1580-1660), for example, declares that his ancestors had come to early Ming China from *Tianfang* (Arabia or Mecca). Several generations of family members supposedly held positions in the (*Islamic*) *Bureau of Astronomy* and Hongwu's respect for them is mentioned repeatedly in rhetoric forms similar to the Ma genealogies.¹⁰⁸ Benite shows that many elite Muslim families mention a personal link to the Ming founder to bolster their status. We find similar patterns in the Ma material. Ma Deluding's employment as astronomer and Ma Shayihe's supposed marriage into the imperial family were already mentioned. Moreover, the *Ma Genealogy* imagines the 'Hongwu link' as one of amazing intimacy, with the Ming founder personally accompanying Ma Deluding's funeral procession *on foot* and exclaiming at the grave, with tears in his eyes: "Heaven took my most important assistant" [此天喪我右臂助也]!¹⁰⁹ The credibility of this story is somewhat weakened by the fact that not even the name of Ma Deluding—unlike the name of his son, the translator Ma Shayihe—appears in official sources.

Why then should genealogy compilers purport such legends in the first place? Following Szonyi's insight that the manipulation of genealogies was a common practice in late imperial China, Benite has clarified that Muslim families employed the same strategy, modifying it to suit their specific aims: "The topos of immigrating Muslims serving at the imperial court is a sort of a Chinese Muslim version of American 'Mayflower origins' stories."¹¹⁰ It legitimised residence in China by removing suspicions both of 'illegal' migration and, particularly, of possible descent from Muslims who had previously served the Mongols.¹¹¹ In this light, it is at least possible that even the claims of the genealogical sources about the four Mas *immigrating* to China in the early Ming—according to the *Ma Genealogy*, Ma Deluding arrived at the county of Jiangning 江寧 (Nanjing) in 1369—are legendary.

¹⁰⁸ Wang Daiyu's preface to his *Zhengjiao zhenquan* 正教真詮 [*True Commentary on the Orthodox Teaching*] (1642). See Benite (2008), "Marrano Emperor," 281.

¹⁰⁹ Lit., 'my right helping arm.' *Ma Genealogy*, in Ma & Chen (1996), *Zhongguo huihui lifa*, 1026.

¹¹⁰ Benite (2008), "Marrano Emperor," 283.

¹¹¹ On Central Eurasian Muslim migration in the early Ming, see Morris Rossabi (1997), "Ming Foreign Policy: The Case of Hami," in *China and Her Neighbours: Borders, Visions of the Other, Foreign Policy, 10th to 19th Century*, eds. Roderich Ptak & Sabine Dabringhaus (Wiesbaden), 83-91.

Perhaps they had indeed served the Mongols and were inherited personnel, similarly to the above-mentioned official Ḥaydar who was employed through the institutional continuity of the *Islamic Astronomical Bureau*. As the sources are too limited to unravel their contradictions and both possibilities (the Mas as early Ming immigrants versus the Mas as Mongol-inherited personnel) make perfect sense, it cannot be the task of the historian to prove which one is true. The task, in this case, is to show—as this section has attempted to do—*why* both versions are plausible, *why* certain sources, such as the *Ma Genealogy*, might be tempted to narrate events in a certain way, and *how* this temptation would be related to ramifications of the Mongol era.

Yet Benite's discussion of 'immigrating Muslims serving at the imperial court' as not much more than a useful rhetorical topos is not enough. Various sources confirm that foreign immigrants skilled in astronomy did indeed arrive in the early Ming. Bei Lin 貝琳 (fl. 1477), Vice-Director of the Astronomical Bureau in Nanjing, recalls that "when in the eighteenth year of Hongwu (1385) barbarians from afar [came to China], surrendered and paid allegiance [to the Ming], they offered the dust board method of calendrical astronomy to calculate in advance occultations of the six luminaries" [洪武十八年遠夷歸化，獻土盤曆法，預推六曜干犯].¹¹² There is clear evidence that the translation of the *Book on Heavenly Patterns* was an imperially sponsored project and that Ma Shayiheī was indeed serving at the imperial court as one of the translators. He appears in court-produced sources as a *bianxiu* 編修 (Junior Compiler), a participant in historiographic and other compilations: with only four posts in the Ming an exclusive job.¹¹³ Wu Bozong names both Ma Shayiheī and Ma Hama as two of the four major actors in the *Heavenly Patterns* translation and clarifies that the project was only possible due to their translational competence. Even more, it has gone largely unnoticed (partly due to the failure to identify 馬沙亦黑 [Ma Shayiheī] and 馬懿赤黑 [Ma Yichihei] as one and the same person¹¹⁴) that Ma Shayiheī was not only involved in the Persian-to-Chinese *Heavenly Patterns* translation, but also in the compilation of the Chinese-Mongolian *Sino-Barbarian Translations*: a 1382 edict names him as one of the translators. Thus, Ma must have

¹¹² Bei Lin 貝琳 (1996 [1477]), postface to *Qizheng tuibu* 七政推步 [Calculation of the Motions of the Seven Celestial Bodies], in Ma & Chen, *Zhongguo huihui lifa*, 532. The *Qizheng tuibu* is a restoration of the early Ming *Islamic Astronomy* translation. "Six luminaries" [六曜] refers to the moon and the five planets that are visible to the naked eye.

¹¹³ For the Junior Compiler post, see Charles O. Hucker (1985), *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), title 4635.

¹¹⁴ But see Ma Zuyi 馬祖毅 (1998) in his *Zhongguo fanyi jianshi* 中國翻譯簡史 [A Concise History of Translation in China] (Beijing), 223-224, stating explicitly that "Ma Yichihei 馬懿赤黑 is namely Ma Shayiheī 馬沙亦黑 who translated Islamic astronomy" [馬懿赤黑, 即譯回回曆的馬沙亦黑].

been not only bi-, but trilingual, uniting in his person the three *linguae francae* of the Yuan, Chinese, Mongolian, and Persian.¹¹⁵ While a purely ideology-critical approach might doubt the *Nanjing Scroll* when it proudly narrates how Hongwu conferred the title ‘Great Muslim Master’ [回回大師] upon Ma Shayihe and suspect it to be an invention, there can be no doubt that the ‘Great Muslim Master’ title is authentic (if a proper title at all and not just a vague label for a scholar of Islamic background). Wu Bozong and the *Ming History* confirm it, using exactly the same four characters, 回回大師. Wu Bozong, in particular, who was personally involved in the translation work, is a decidedly trustworthy source: as a ‘Chinese’ Hanlin official, he would have had no comprehensible reason to make up titles for the adornment of his foreign colleagues. For the purpose of synthesis, we shall now return from the Ma family translators to the big picture of Mongol migration history with which we started.

5. Conclusion

If we consider the problems discussed in the last section on the background of this chapter as a whole, it is clear that even elements in the Ma genealogies which must be legendary (the surname Ma as an imperial reward, Ma Shayihe as Hongwu’s son-in-law, the Ming founder shedding tears at the grave of the Ma family ancestor) point to significant truths: the cosmopolitanism of the early Ming court, its ‘liberal’ immigration policies, and the crucial role non-Chinese played in the founding phase as translators and other specialists. Without these realities, the genealogy compilers would not have come up with their embellishments. While some of their claims are implausible, they could seem credible to contemporaries because they are exaggerations of certain facts of the early Ming situation and not just random fiction. There is method in their fabrication.

How, in conclusion, should we characterise the situation on which the Ma genealogies were based? This chapter has shown that the perception of the early Ming government using its power to “stamp out foreign influence”¹¹⁶ is an oversimplification. Likewise, the (early) Ming is not well described as “fiercely anti-Mongol,” “antiforeign,” “nationalistic” or “xenophobic.”¹¹⁷ Looking at the Ming

¹¹⁵ The role of these languages for the early Ming will be discussed in Chapter Two.

¹¹⁶ Farmer (1995), *Early Ming Legislation*, 104.

¹¹⁷ Standen (2013), “Foreign Conquerors of China,” 39; Overfield (2001), *Sources of Global History* I, 284; Hucker (1975), *China’s Imperial Past*, 288; Milligan (1995), *Pleasures and Pains*, 19.

through a very different pair of eyes, we might see even clearer. Harold Bloom, in his classic study *The Anxiety of Influence*, has argued that all original poets fear literary influence, since their precursors, while inspiring them, prevent them from finding their own distinct voice. These “immense anxieties of indebtedness” cannot be evaded, “for what strong maker desires the realization that he has failed to create himself?”¹¹⁸ Taking this as a metaphor for the early Ming situation, we must admit that the Ming makers found themselves caught in a similar trap: rather than an alien force that was forever expelled in 1368, the Mongols were for them, in many respects, a source of inspiration. At the same time, they were not free of the *Hua-Yi* bias of Chinese tradition. I will refer to that basic situation, henceforth, with one word: the ‘Hongwu dilemma.’ From the Hongwu dilemma, the contradictions explored in this chapter arose. The Hongwu dilemma, as I have shown, led to substantial differences between sinocentric rhetoric and practical politics—and the failure to separate those aspects is one origin of the image of the ‘closed’ Ming. Early Ming rulers promised to expel the wretched barbarians *and* explicitly allowed them to stay, as long as they fulfilled certain expectations. Qualified foreigners were encouraged to make military and civilian careers. Yongle explicitly pointed out that loyalty, not ethnicity counted. On the level of dynastic succession, the Hongwu dilemma let the Ming founder promise to purify the realm of polluting Mongol customs, while recognising his foreign predecessors as legitimate rulers over China. He did so not least, of course, to keep the dynastic cycle narrative unbroken and enhance his own legitimacy.

Apart from rhetoric and practice, a distinction was also made between official discourse and opposition to it. The sources indicate ‘grassroots xenophobia’ but also the enforcement of official tolerance. Regarding ‘tolerance,’ I argued that it would be naive to overlook the instrumentalism behind ‘liberal’ immigration decrees and celebrate Ming diversity in an anachronistic way. An emphasis of the ‘multi-cultural’ aspects of the Ming should include the insight that they were a logical consequence of the interests and needs of an imperial administration. On the other hand, the Hongwu regime did not just lack alternatives to integration, as the early Ming state was able to impose enormous population movements. While Hongwu’s stance testifies chiefly to pragmatism and the agenda to make the most of the various talents of his subjects, such pragmatism only worked because some fundamental ‘nationalist’ or xenophobic bias did indeed not exist. One expression of this pragmatism was the

¹¹⁸ Harold Bloom (1997 [1973]), *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press), 5.

employment of foreigners and immigrants as translators in institutions of the new dynasty. As the chapter illustrated, early Ming Chinese were dependent on them when it came to linguistic skills. In some cases it is open to debate whether a translator was a recent immigrant or came from an established family with ‘Mongol migration background,’ in other cases bilingual personnel was directly inherited from Yuan institutions (Haydar, Adawuding). The court was aware of their value in foreign relations: Jurchen and Central Eurasian rulers were certainly impressed by the fact that Chinese envoys appeared who could talk to them in their own languages. Thus, much in contrast to the officially proclaimed view that the Central Realm was not interested in ‘barbarian’ affairs, the early Ming court cultivated expertise in them.

This chapter has argued that non-Chinese populations and individuals with ‘Mongol migration background’ formed a sizeable part of early Ming subjects and constituted an important aspect of Mongol legacies. It has further argued that the early Ming pursued a policy of pragmatic tolerance towards them and illustrated this argument through immigrants as translators. Language competence was clearly one of the desired talents of foreigners mentioned in the early Ming ‘tolerance edicts.’ But what languages were actually involved in the linguistic landscape of the early Ming and their language and translation policies? How were they themselves related to the Mongol heritage? These questions are the focus of the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

The early Ming linguistic landscape as a Mongol legacy

This chapter moves the focus from ‘translators as people’ to the languages people spoke. To examine Mongol legacy in the realm of language, it uses the concept of linguistic landscape (LL) in the traditional sense (the totality of languages or dialects people spoke) and draws attention to the written presence of languages in the early Ming. Without such a basis our discussion of language policies would remain abstract and ahistorical. On the basis of the definition given earlier (*covert* ‘language policies’ as *the sum of administrative decisions on languages and translation*), this chapter zooms in on the decision to found a *Bureau of Translators*. As a new institution, established in 1407, the *Bureau* reveals specific needs of the Ming, and its choice of languages to be studied will be discussed as a case of *status planning*, a basic element in all language policy.¹ This angle will reveal the innovative dimension of the *Bureau* and enable us to question the distinction between ‘multilingual foreign’ dynasties (Yuan, Qing) and ‘monolingual Chinese’ dynasties (Ming).² The chapter argues, first, that the *Bureau* foundation cannot be properly understood without what I call the ‘Mongol afterglow’ in the realm of language. On the basis of this afterglow, it surveys the *Bureau* curriculum. After explaining the absence of crucial languages (Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese, Malay, Arabic), it will show how *Bureau* status planning was entangled with Mongol legacy. Beginning with less obvious cases (Tibetan, Yunnan languages), it moves on to Mongolian and Persian as major ‘Yuan legacy languages.’

1. Mongol afterglow in the realm of language learning

If we want to truly understand the backdrop on which early Ming language policies and institutions such as the *Bureau of Translators* have been erected, we first have to take a step back and examine the Mongol world in more palpable detail. This section demonstrates the unprecedented degree to which the Mongol empire and later the Yuan dynasty in China as one of its successor *khanates* had already invested in language competence.

¹ For a discussion of language policy and status planning, see the Introduction.

² This distinction was conceived, from a Translation Studies perspective, by Eva Hung (2005), “Translation in China,” and (2011), “Government Translators.”

As the Mongols ruled over diverse populations who conversed in countless languages and language families (Turkic, Indo-Iranian, Chinese, Persian, Arabic, Georgian, Slavic), their courts, one of which the Ming inherited, were hubs of language contact. Fourteenth-century songs, in which Mongolian and Chinese phrases thoroughly mix, are just one example.³ Mongol courts were also centres of language mediation and developed elaborate infrastructures to carry out translation. Visiting the Mongol capital Karakorum in the 1250s, the historian Juvainī was impressed to see “scribes for Persian, Uyghur, Chinese, Tibetan, Tangut, etc., so that to whatever locale a decree is to be written, it is issued in the language and script of that people”: a system, I argue, that the Ming later imitated with the *Bureau of Translators*.⁴ Some Mongol mediators commanded a wide range of languages. A Latin-language record tells of an envoy who knew Hungarian, Russian, Turkish, German, Persian, and Mongolian.⁵ Such multilingual talents did not just vanish after the Yuan demise. When a Persian embassy arrived in Ming territory in 1420, their “interpreter” (*kālamchi* کلمچی) was a certain Mawlana Hajji Yusuf مولانا حاجی یوسف “who knew Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Mongol and Chinese languages” [دان عربی و پارسی و ترکی و مغولی و ختای].⁶

Multilingual Mongol messengers, however, were not necessarily Mongols themselves. Just as the early Ming mainly recruited among non-Chinese, as shown in Chapter One, the Mongols had recruited among non-Mongol subjects, in the East especially among Uyghurs and Khitans who spoke a language related to Mongolian.⁷ Genghis Khan’s interpreter Yelü Ahai, for example, was a Khitan from the powerful Yelü clan. Other language mediators, known by name, are the Kashmiri Teke, the Uyghur Argun Sarig, Chagan from Balkh in Afghanistan, and a former Korean monk with the name of Cho I.⁸ Marco Polo, too, was no doubt employed by the Great Khan due to his linguistic talents: shortly after arriving at the Khan’s court, he “knew four

³ Arthur Waley (1957), “Chinese-Mongol Hybrid Songs,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 20, 581-584. For the bigger picture, see Yaron Matras (2009), *Language Contact* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

⁴ Juvainī, *World Conqueror*, 607.

⁵ *De facto Ungarie Magne* (1235) in Heinrich Dörrie (1956), “Drei Texte zur Geschichte der Ungarn und Mongolen,” *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Phil.-hist. Klasse* 6, 158.

⁶ Persian original and translation in Hafiz-i Abru حافظ ابرو (author) & K. M. Maitra (translator) (1970 [1420]), *A Persian Embassy to China: Being an Extract from Zubdatu’t Tawarikh of Hafiz Abru* (New York: Paragon), 59-60.

⁷ Juha Janhunen (2003), “Para-Mongolic,” in Janhunen, *Mongolic Languages*, 393-395.

⁸ Herbert Franke (1952), “Could the Mongol Emperors Read and Write Chinese?,” *Asia Major* 3, 28; Walter Fuchs (1946), “Analecta zur mongolischen Übersetzungsliteratur der Yüan-Zeit,” *Monumenta Serica* 11, 62-64; Allsen (2000), “Rasūlid Hexaglot,” 4-35; William Ellsworth Henthorn (1963), *Korea: The Mongol Invasions* (Leiden: Brill), 67.

languages with their alphabets and writing” [*soit de (quatre) langaies et de quatre letres et scripture*].⁹ One Mongol mediator, after his capture, even turned out to be English: exiled from his country, he had wandered aimlessly through the Middle East where he “studied several languages with equal facility” [*eadem facilitate didicit plures linguas*] and “pronounced them so correctly that he was taken for a native” [*tam recte proferre, ut indigena putaretur*]. The Mongols immediately offered him employment, “because they were in great need of interpreters” [*pro eo quod interpretibus indigebant*].¹⁰

Due to this need, special knowledge of the various languages significant within the Mongol sphere could be an *entrée billet* into imperial service. As shown above, we know many specialists by name. The historian Rashīd al-Dīn (1247-1318) must be added to these as a true linguist: in his global history *Jāmi‘ al-Tawārīkh* [*Compendium of Chronicles*], he compares Mongolian dialects of Siberia and the steppe and provides a favourable assessment of literary Chinese.¹¹ Such scholarship had become possible through his unprecedented access to sources in Persian, Chinese, Arabic, Hebrew, Turkic, Mongolian, Latin, and Indian languages, together with native informants, all within easy reach at the Ilkhan’s court and perfectly illustrating L. G. Kelly’s remark that “without translation, there is no history of the world.”¹² Meanwhile, in late Yuan or early Ming China, the scholar Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (?-1396) finished his *Shushi huiyao* 書史會要 [*Essentials in Calligraphic History*], which contains not only Chinese examples but also explanations of foreign scripts, such as Khitan characters.¹³ Tao further explains Phagspa, the ‘international’ script of the Mongol world, invented under Kublai Khan to transcribe the various languages of the Mongol empire through one single symbol system, and compares it to Old Uyghur, on which the Mongolian script was based:

⁹ I assume, in accordance with the perspective of Vogel (2013), that *Macro Polo Was In China*, and did not base his account on mere hearsay. Moreover, even if he did never personally reach Yuan China, he must have had excellent informants: most scholars agree that his account is full of accurate detail. Franco-Italian original and translation from Simon Gaunt (2013), *Marco Polo’s Le devisement du monde: Narrative Voice, Language and Diversity* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer), 102.

¹⁰ Matthew Paris (author) & Henry Richards Luard (editor) (2012 [1259]), *Matthaei Parisiensis Chronica Majora*, vol. IV: *A.D. 1240 to A.D. 1247* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 274-275.

¹¹ Karl Jahn (1969), “Wissenschaftliche Kontakte zwischen Iran und China in der Mongolenzeit,” *Anzeiger der philosophisch-historischen Klasse der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 106, 206-208; Allsen (2000), “Rasūlid Hexaglot,” 32-33.

¹² L. G. Kelly (1979), *The True Interpreter: A History of Translation Theory and Practice in the West* (New York: St. Martin’s Press).

¹³ Daniel Kane (2009), *The Kitan Language and Script* (Leiden: Brill), 169-170. On Tao, see Frederick Wade Mote (1954), “T’ao Tsung-i and his Cho keng lu,” PhD Thesis, University of Washington.



Figure 1. Tao Zongyi's explanation of the Uyghur and Phagspa scripts (late Yuan or early Ming)¹⁴

This concern with language learning, exemplified by the systematic comparative studies by Rashīd al-Dīn and Tao Zongyi, was often related to a society's 'Mongol experience.' The first translation bureau in Korea, for example, was created in 1276, only two decades after the Mongols subjugated the peninsula. Named the *Sayeok weon* 司譯院 [*Court for Translation Management*], it was a kind of Korean predecessor to the *Siyi guan* 四夷館 [*Bureau of Translators*] of the early Ming.¹⁵ Just as the Ming *Bureau*, the Korean *Sayeok weon* was simultaneously a translating facility and a language school, to which end the institute developed its own glossaries and teaching materials for Chinese, Japanese, Jurchen, and Mongolian.¹⁶ While Koreans had no direct contacts with Mongols after 1368, it says a lot about the ramifications of Mongol conquest that its afterglow lingered on for centuries in the form of the *Sayeok weon* curriculum: Mongolian remained part of it until the 1890s. In that sense, the Mongol empire 'inspired' language study throughout Eurasia. The Mongols set a new stage on which various languages were spoken, then left it as suddenly as they had come. Now the Ming had to decide how

¹⁴ On this page, Tao, within his systematic comparison, points out that "although the Uyghur script comprises twenty or so letters" [畏吾兒字雖有二十餘母], there are only fifteen distinct graphic forms (just as ㄣ and ㄞ in the Arabic script).

¹⁵ On the *Sayeok weon*, see Song Ki-Joong (1981), "The Study of Foreign Languages in the Yi Dynasty (1392-1910)," *Bulletin of the Korean Research Centre: Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities* 54, 1-45; see also Rawski (2015), *Cross-Border Perspectives*, 58.

¹⁶ Chinese and Japanese were certainly taught for the use of interpreters, not for the translation of documents, as literary Chinese was used in written communication (see below).

to play on it. How did that stage, as a Mongol legacy, look like? The place to begin this investigation is the *Bureau of Translators*.

2. The *Bureau of Translators* curriculum

The fact that the *Sino-Barbarian Translations*, the Ming's first major translation project, were compiled in 1389, around two decades before the first *Bureau of Translators* was founded (1407), probably in Nanjing, shows that language skills were already there.¹⁷ The aim of the *Bureau* was to channel such skills—floating around freely when the Mongol world collapsed—into institutions of the new dynasty. To be sure, there had been periods before the Mongols when translation became especially important. The westward expansion of the Han 漢 (206 BC - 220 AD) and Tang dynasties brought them into contact with diverse populations speaking in languages previously unknown to the Chinese, leading to new institutions for language mediation.¹⁸ However, the *Bureau* brought in two innovations that have not yet been duly recognised. One of them is the huge amount of different scripts involved. The fledgling Ming was, to an unprecedented extent, confronted with emerging forms of writing, mostly unrelated to the Chinese logosyllabic tradition. The Mongolian script was created around 1205, based on the Uyghur alphabet. Thai writing, invented circa 1280, is a variation of Khmer, and ultimately of Indian origin. In the four centuries before the Ming, formerly-nomadic empire-building peoples—first the Khitans, then the Tanguts, and finally the Jurchens—had adopted Chinese logograms to their own languages and created peculiar scripts that looked 'like Chinese' but were not. Thus, they symbolically tapped into the political authority of sinographs but excluded Chinese from the pool of recipients of the message. The Ming decided to play along with this game by making Jurchen one of the eight distinct languages studied in the *Bureau of Translators*.

¹⁷ The sources do not indicate whether the original *Bureau of Translators* of 1407 was located in Nanjing or Beijing. To me, Nanjing seems more probable, as the decades-long process of relocating the capital began not earlier than 1409. According to a permanent exhibition in the *Zheng He baochuan yizhi gongyuan* 鄭和寶船遺址公園 [*Zheng He Treasure Ship Ruins Park*], Nanjing (visited on 10 April 2016), "ruins of the *Bureau of Translators*" [四夷館遺址] can be found close to the remnants of the early Ming palace in modern Nanjing. However, all my attempts to locate them failed. In the opinion of Liu Yingsheng, "not a single trace is left" [完全找不到] of either the *Bureau of Translators* or the *Bureau of Interpreters* in modern Nanjing; personal conversation at Nanjing University, 18 April 2016.

¹⁸ Rachel Lung (2011), *Interpreters in Early Imperial China* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins).

A further innovative aspect of the *Bureau*, even more significant, is its systematic linguistic departmentalisation. What is important is not that officials studied languages in institutionalised form, but the fact that the *Bureau* appears to be the first institution that recognises them not just as an ill-defined babel of ‘barbarian languages’ but as ‘distinct’ entities, studied in distinct departments. The main reason behind this, I argue, is the increased interest in foreign languages and scripts, which the Mongols had left behind throughout Eurasia and which continued to have an effect in the early Ming. At the time of its foundation, the *Bureau* consisted of eight departments (*guan* 館), each responsible for studying, teaching, and producing glossaries for one language and related script:

Table 2 Languages studied at the early Ming *Bureau of Translators*

Language in Chinese primary sources	Identification of language	Language family	Script (script type) [script family/relations]
<i>Huihui</i> 回回	Persian	Indo-European	Persian (abjad) [Arabic]
<i>Xitian</i> 西天	Sanskrit	Indo-European	Lantsa (abugida) [Brahmic]
<i>Xifan</i> 西番	Tibetan	Sino-Tibetan	Tibetan (abugida) [Brahmic]
<i>Miandian</i> 緬甸	Burmese	Sino-Tibetan	Burmese (abugida) [Brahmic]
<i>Dada</i> 韃靼	Mongolian	Mongolic	Mongolian (alphabet) [related to Old Uyghur]
<i>Gaochang</i> 高昌	Uyghur	Turkic	Old Uyghur (abjad) [related to Syriac]
<i>Nüzhen</i> 女真	Jurchen	Tungusic	Jurchen (logo-phonographic) [Chinese]
<i>Baiyi</i> 百夷	Shan? Zhuang?	Tai-Kadai	Ahom script variety (abugida) [Brahmic]

The *Bureau* documented its professionalisation by noting that, in 1407, it “was divided into eight departments, called *Dada*, *Nüzhen*, *Xifan*, *Xitian*, *Huihui*, *Baiyi*, *Gaochang*, and *Miandian*” [分八館，曰韃靼、女直、西番、西天、回回、百彝、高昌、緬甸].¹⁹ All terms point to distinct languages, as listed in Table 2 (with the exception of the Tai-Kadai language *Baiyi* for which the language identification is only approximate).²⁰ The plurality of language families, with almost every language

¹⁹ *Regulations for the Bureau of Translators*, chapter 1, “Establishment” [建設].

²⁰ In the sixteenth century, *Bureau* departments for *Xianluo* 暹羅 (Thai) and *Babai* 八百 (languages spoken in the region around Chiangmai, Thailand) were also established.

studied belonging to a different one (except for two Indo-European and two Sino-Tibetan pairs), and the multitude of writing systems involved (the Jurchen script being the only one related to Chinese) point to the complexity of the early Ming linguistic landscape.²¹ Morphologically, many neighbours spoke agglutinative languages (Uyghur, Jurchen, Khitan and Mongol, Korean) that were quite distinct from an isolating language like Chinese, so that even those willing to study translation had to exert considerable efforts. Significantly, the *Bureau* did not deal with the languages of pre-modern Korea, Vietnam, and Japan, whose elites were using ‘literary Chinese’ (more accurately called an East Asian textual tradition) since they had emerged as separate polities in Tang times or earlier.²² Just as the Chinese script had enabled earlier empires to unite speakers of mutually unintelligible speech varieties, it now allowed people from different polities to read the same text, even if they pronounced it in radically different ways. Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese officials, scholars, warriors, physicians, clergymen, and teachers all shared a classical language, originally from China, that had become cosmopolitan.²³

It could be objected, at this point, that the cosmopolitanism of the Chinese script became more limited in the period under investigation. Koreans, indeed, created a writing system of their own in 1443, the *Hangul* 한글 script. However, in contrast to modern nationalist discourse, their aim was not to carve out a ‘national identity’ against the Central Realm, but almost the opposite: to teach envoys how to pronounce Chinese writing according to contemporary standards of the Ming court. As Wang Sixiang 王思翔 has shown, despite sharing a common written heritage, Chinese and Koreans did not usually speak each other’s languages and interpreters played significant roles on Korean missions to the Ming court.²⁴ Early Ming bureaucrats expected Korean diplomats to speak ‘Ming Chinese’ (i.e., *guanhua*, based on a Nanjing dialect) and the Hongwu emperor himself once made fun of a Korean envoy for his inability to understand him.²⁵ Kwŏn Kŭn 權近 (1352-1409) returned to Korea with an “oral edict” [口諭] which explicitly demanded that, in the

²¹ We find one alphabet (separate letters for vowels and consonants), four abugidas (consonant-vowel sequences written as one unit), two abjads (optional vowel marking), and one logo-phonographic script, which includes pure logograms (characters denoting meaning but no phonetic element) and pure phonograms (sounds without fixed meaning).

²² Lewis (2009), *Cosmopolitan Empire*, 153-156.

²³ Elman (2014), *Rethinking East Asian Languages*, passim.

²⁴ Wang Sixiang 王思翔 (2014), “The Sounds of Our Country: Interpreters, Linguistic Knowledge, and the Politics of Language in Early Chosŏn Korea,” in Elman, *Rethinking East Asian Languages*, 58-95.

²⁵ Wang 王 (2014), “Sounds of Our Country, 65.

future, only envoys who knew *spoken* Chinese should be sent to the Ming court: “if they understand Chinese, let them come; if they don’t have a clue about Chinese, don’t let them come” [漢兒話省的著他來，一發不省的不要來].²⁶ Why did the Ming expect such linguistic competence of Koreans but did not make similar demands towards, say, Mongol or Jurchen envoys? A likely explanation is that Korea was not seen as barbarian (*yi*) or foreign but virtually as ‘Chinese’ (due to similar political and legal institutions and the ‘shared script’ or *tongwen* 同文). Hence, Koreans had to speak Ming Chinese, while the same could not be expected from barbarians proper.

The contrast between spoken and written language is also a plausible explanation for the fact—puzzling at first—that we do have Korean-Chinese glossaries from the Ming. Why were they produced at all, given that the two polities communicated in literary Chinese? The obvious answer is that they were meant to be used by interpreters only. Pelliot’s material suggests that the Ming institutionally distinguished between translating texts (*Bureau of Translators*) and oral interpreting (*Bureau of Interpreters*).²⁷ If this distinction is correct, we can *a priori* say that all Ming Korean-Chinese or Vietnamese-Chinese glossaries must have been produced by the *Bureau of Interpreters*; these languages would not interest the *Bureau of Translators*, as there were no non-Chinese scripts involved.²⁸ Similarly, while Ren Ping 任萍 has studied materials that were, in his opinion, produced by a ‘Japanese department’ of the *Bureau of Translators*, it seems more likely that Japanese was only studied at the *Bureau of Interpreters*.²⁹ Languages had to be considered *Yi* (barbarian) to be studied in the *Bureau of Translators*, which is, after all, a customary rendering for *Bureau for the Yi of the Four Cardinal Directions* (*Siyi guan*). One such *Yi* language was Tibetan. Why did early Ming language status planning include it and how was it entangled with Mongol legacy?

²⁶ Translation and original quoted after Wang 王 (2014), “Sounds of Our Country, 66.

²⁷ Pelliot (1948), “Sseu-yi-kouan,” *passim*.

²⁸ For Vietnamese, see Jeremy H. C. S. Davidson (1975), “A New Version of the Chinese-Vietnamese Vocabulary of the Ming Dynasty,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 38, 296-315.

²⁹ Ren Ping 任萍 (2007), “Ming *Siyi guan* zhong *Riben guan* yiyu bianzhuan kao 明四夷館中日本館譯語編撰考 [A Study on the Dictionaries Compiled by the Japanese Department of the Translator’s College],” *Ribenxue luntan* 日本學論壇 2, 73-76.

3. Tibetan and Phagspa

The contemporary conflict over Tibet, Elliot Sperling has shown, is a conflict over history.³⁰ When Chinese political figures assert that “for more than 700 years the central government of China has continuously exercised sovereignty over Tibet,” they actually say (without making any mention of the Mongols) that Tibet became a part of China thanks to Kublai Khan’s conquests of the thirteenth century.³¹ Rossabi, a leading authority, supports this claim by writing that, in 1268, Kublai “truly began to impose Mongol sovereignty over Tibet.”³² Herbert Franke, equally an authority on the matter, doubted the supposed ‘conquest’ and concluded that Tibet remained “outside the Chinese oikumene” in Yuan times.³³ Han Rulin 韓儒林, in a seminal work, presents the existence of a postal relay system and frequent official missions of Tibetan lamas to Khanbaliq (Beijing) as proof that the Mongols had incorporated Tibet into Yuan China.³⁴ Whether this evidence supports the argument is questionable though: expanding infrastructure into the borderlands is hardly the same as making Tibet an integral part of China. In any case, it is clear that the Mongols expanded their influence into Tibet *to some degree* and, consequently, Tibetan culture ‘travelled’ to Khanbaliq. The polymath Drogön Chögyal Phagpa (1235-1280) introduced Tibetan Buddhist court rituals and created an identification between Kublai Khan and a *chakravartin*, a universal ruler in the Buddhist tradition.³⁵

Knowledge of the Tibetan language was important for early Ming rulers who wanted to keep this ‘Tibet connection,’ which was—regardless of whether they were individually believers in Tibetan Buddhism—a useful tool to convey the universality of their claim to rule. To do so, they regularly invited Tibetan lamas and monks for imperial audiences.³⁶ Tibetan ‘tributary’ envoys, who were often also traders,

³⁰ Elliot Sperling (2004), *The Tibet-China Conflict: History and Polemics* (Washington: East-West Center Washington).

³¹ PRC official White Paper, quoted after Sperling (2004), *Tibet-China Conflict*, 1.

³² Morris Rossabi (1988), *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 144. A similar view can be found in Shen Weirong (1989), “Yuanchao zhongyang zhengfu dui Xizang de tongzhi 元朝中央政府對西藏的統治 [The Rule of the Yuan Central Government Over Tibet],” *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究 3, 136-148.

³³ Franke (1981) “Tibetans in Yuan China,” 303.

³⁴ Han Rulin 韓儒林 (1986), *Yuanchao shi* 元朝史 [*History of the Yuan*] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe), vol. II, 268. This work is significant as the first comprehensive Chinese-language history of the Yuan published since 1949.

³⁵ Herbert Franke (1994), “From Tribal Chieftain to Universal Emperor and God: The Legitimation of the Yüan Dynasty,” in *China Under Mongol Rule*, ed. Herbert Franke (Brookfield, Vt.: Variorum), 3-85.

³⁶ Robinson (2008), “Ming Court,” 372; and (2012), “Mongolian Migration,” 114.

travelled to the Ming capital and dwelled in the *Bureau of Interpreters* which also served as a hostel for foreign guests, as we shall see in Chapter Three. As Shen Weirong has shown, although not all place names recorded in the *Veritable Records of the Ming* are identified yet, it is certain that almost all famous monasteries in central Tibet are mentioned for sending embassies.³⁷ Translational skills were decisive in this endeavour, as Hongwu and Yongle invested Tibetan clerics with bilingual Chinese-Tibetan letters of patent.³⁸ Thus, unsurprisingly, Tibetan was studied in the *Xifan guan* 西番館, the Tibetan department of the *Bureau of Translators*. In the same year as the *Bureau* was founded (1407), Yongle commissioned a pentaglot account to remember the visit of the fifth Tibetan Karmapa, Halima 哈立麻, to Nanjing, who had been invited to preside over a large-scale ceremony of universal salvation in the memory of the deceased Ming founder:



Figure 2. Pentaglot Halima Account (1407): Chinese, Persian, Baiyi (?), Tibetan, Mongolian³⁹

³⁷ Shen (2007), “Accommodating Barbarians from Afar,” 52.

³⁸ Elliot Sperling (1982), “The 1413 Ming Embassy to Tsong-kha-pa and the Arrival of Byams-chen Chos-rje Shākya Ye-shes at the Ming court,” *Journal of the Tibet Society* 2, 105-108.

³⁹ Scripts named from right to left. *Rulai Dabaofawang wei Ming Taizu ji huanghou jian pu du da zhai chang shoujuan hua* 如來大寶法王爲明太祖及皇后建普渡大齋長手卷畫 [Miracles of the Mass of Universal Salvation Conducted by the Fifth Karmapa for Yongle]. Handscroll, ink and colours on silk, 4,968 x 66 cm. Norbulingkha Palace, Lhasa. Image: from Clunas & Harrison-Hall (2014), *Ming*, 239. Luo Wenhua has translated the Chinese part of the inscription into English in Patricia Berger (2001), “Miracles in Nanjing: An Imperial Account of the Fifth Karmapa’s Visit to the Chinese Capital,” in *Cultural Intersections in Later Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Marsha Weiner (Honolulu), 162-166.

The miracles that the Karmapa reportedly worked are remembered in Tibetan, Chinese, Mongolian, Persian, and a yet unidentified language, which I strongly suspect is *Baiyi* of Yunnan (studied at the *Bureau of Translators*).⁴⁰ It is significant that this work, related to an imperial ritual, clearly expects a multilingual early Ming audience. This audience speaks a language of the *Semu* people the Mongols had relied on (Persian), the language of a foreign religion the Mongols had integrated into court ritual (Tibetan), and the language of the Mongols themselves (Mongolian).

A similar example for Tibetan as one language of a multilingual audience is a collection of *dharani* (Buddhist spells or mantras), produced by the Ming court in 1431, in Tibetan, Chinese, Mongolian, and Sanskrit in the Lantsa script which was not in use before Mongol times:



Figure 3. *Dharani* in Chinese, Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Mongolian⁴¹

⁴⁰ Persian is mistaken for Arabic in Berger (2001), “Miracles in Nanjing,” 121. For the fifth language scholars suggested Sanskrit, Uyghur, Chagatai Turkic, and old Burmese. From the secondary literature it is not even clear if both the language and the script in which it is written are unidentified or if the script is known and only the language it translates into writing is unknown. The resolution of all images I have seen to date is too low to make a well-grounded comment. However, even Figure 2 can clarify that the script looks remarkably similar to the Ahom script used to write *Baiyi*, a Tai-Kadai language of Yunnan (studied in the *Bureau of Translators*). This is supported by Christian Daniels (2012), “Script without Buddhism: Burmese Influence on the Tay (Shan) script of *mäng2 maaw2* as Seen in a Chinese Scroll Painting of 1407,” *International Journal of Asian Studies*, 9, 147-176.

⁴¹ Chinese (top), Sanskrit (middle, left), Tibetan (middle, right), and Mongolian (bottom). *Zhufo pusa miaoxiang minghao jingzhou* 諸佛菩薩妙相名號經咒 [Woodcuts in Marvellous Images, Names, Sutras and Dharanis of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas]. Woodblock-printed, ink on paper. H. 26 cm; W. 16.5 cm. *Musée Guimet*, Paris. Image: from Clunas & Harrison-Hall (2014), *Ming*, 238.

In other cases, Tibetan was not part of signs expecting a multilingual audience but aimed at a Tibetan-reading audience only. Consider this Xuande 宣德 period (1426-1435) altar bowl (Figure 4). Manufactured in Ming China, it bears a Tibetan inscription, offering blessings to the user. Many similar objects are preserved in Tibet where they were sent as gifts by the early Ming:



Figure 4. Altar bowl, Xuande period (1426-1435), with an inscription in Tibetan script⁴²

Such objects show *en passant* that the study of Chinese porcelains is not the monopoly of art historians. Not only do they demand the attention of economic historians, as a yardstick to measure the extent of Sino-foreign trade, they should also be evidence in a comprehensive history of East Asian languages.⁴³ This altar bowl (Figure 4) is only one case of blue-and-white porcelains with non-Chinese scripts that were produced by imperial kilns in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Other objects bear Persian, Arabic, and Phagspa inscriptions.⁴⁴ And the evidence is not limited to

⁴² Incised 宣德年製, “made in the Zhengde era.” Porcelain with underglaze cobalt blue and incised decoration (*anhua* 暗花). Diameter 16.8cm. Image: *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Gift of Mrs. Stanley Herzman, 1984; accession number 1984.483.1. Open Access for Scholarly Content (OASC) collection, www.metmuseum.org.

⁴³ For the significance of porcelains in economic history, see Zheng (2012), *China on the Sea*, 288.

⁴⁴ A Chinese porcelain-brush rest from the Zhengde period with inscriptions in Persian is held by the British Museum (museum no. PDF.A.643AN387150), one side reading *خاما* (*khāmāh*, ‘pen’), the other side *دان* (*dān*, ‘holder’). For a Phagspa example from the same period, see Lü Chenglong 呂成龍 (2001), “Guanyu Basibazi kuan qinghua ciqi niandai zhi wojian 關於八思巴字款青花瓷器年代之我見 [My Opinion Regarding the Age of the Piece of Blue-and-White Porcelain with a Phagspa Inscription],” *Wenwu* 文物 8, 77-83.

porcelain: further artefacts involving multilingual competence include lacquerwork, metalwork, and textiles. An early Ming temple hanging boasts inscriptions in Tibetan and Lantsa-script Sanskrit.⁴⁵ A large bronze bell, commissioned by the Yongle emperor, is completely covered with sutras in Lantsa-script Sanskrit and Chinese.⁴⁶ Clearly, these are not isolated cases, but multiscriptual objects were produced with a certain regularity in early Ming China.

While such multilingualism is usually rather associated with ‘foreign’ regimes (Yuan, Qing) than with ‘monolingual Chinese’ ones (Ming), the evidence points to a late imperial continuity in this regard, in which multilingualism was sometimes more visible and more pronounced (Yuan, Qing) and sometimes less (Ming, at least early Ming). Printing in non-Chinese languages is another case in point. Indeed, while prior to Genghis Khan the Mongols had no script, the written word rapidly acquired importance and the Yuan court encouraged printing in various languages.⁴⁷ Evelyn Rawski has recently elaborated how the Qing court ‘catered’ for its diverse populations by printing in Chinese as well as in non-Chinese languages, such as Manchu, Mongolian, and Tibetan.⁴⁸ It is still fairly overlooked that the Ming court engaged, to some extent, in similar projects. One example is a bilingual edition of the *Xiaojing* 孝經 [*Classic of Filial Piety*], printed in both Mongolian and Chinese.⁴⁹ Specifically for Tibetan, examples are the *dharani* collection (Figure 3) and, even more prestigious, a woodblock-printed bilingual edition of the Tibetan Canon, or *Kangyur*, commissioned by the Ming court in 1410 (Figure 5). Even on the backs of the lacquer manuscript covers for the 108 volumes, the names of the texts are inscribed in both Chinese and Tibetan:

⁴⁵ Silk twill damask. 256.5 x 130.8 cm. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Purchase, Sir Joseph Hotung Gift, 2002; accession number 2002.271. Open Access for Scholarly Content (OASC) collection, www.metmuseum.org.

⁴⁶ The bell is extant and is housed in the Big Bell Temple, or *Dazhongsì* 大鐘寺, in the suburbs of Beijing. See the image in Watt (2005), *Defining Yongle*, 13. However, the Lantsa-script Sanskrit is mistaken for Tibetan (*ibid.*, 18).

⁴⁷ For the example of a calendar block of 1349 printed in Mongolian, see Herbert Franke (1964) “Mittelmongolische Kalenderfragmente aus Turfan,” *Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte* 2, 33-34). For the large corpus of classics, dynastic histories, literary collections, medical works, and the Buddhist canon printed in Chinese, see See K. T. Wu (1950), “Chinese Printing Under Four Alien Dynasties,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 13, 459-501, 515-516.

⁴⁸ Evelyn S. Rawski (2005), “Qing Publishing in Non-Han Languages”, in *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. Cynthia J. Brokaw & Kai-wing Chow (Berkeley: University of California), 304-331.

⁴⁹ Walter Fuchs & Antoine Mostaert (1939), “Ein Ming-Druck einer chinesisch-mongolischen Ausgabe des Hsiao-ching,” *Monumenta Serica* 4, 325-329.

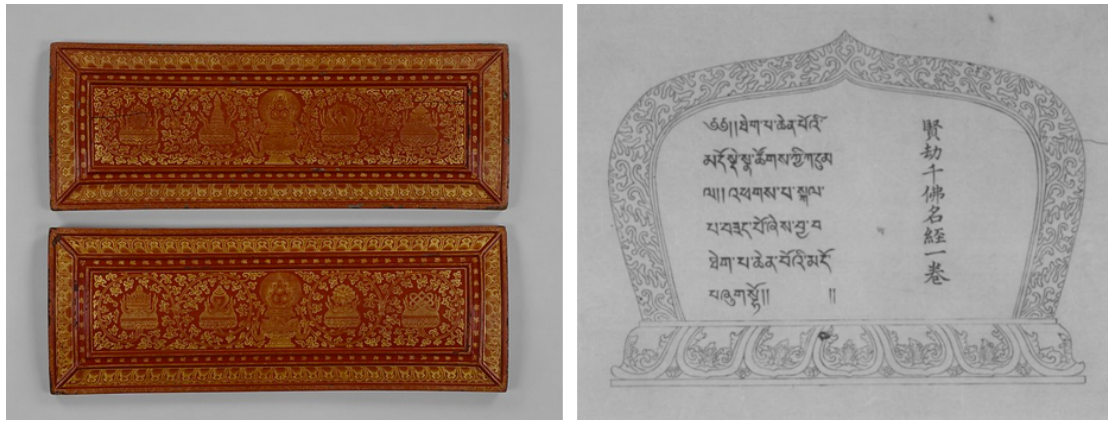


Figure 5. Yongle edition (1410) of the *Kangyur* (Tibetan Canon) in Chinese and Tibetan⁵⁰

As the examples above abundantly illustrate, competence in the Tibetan language and script became relevant for the early Ming both as a means of communication and as a display of knowledge, prestige, and power.⁵¹

Significantly, early Ming emperors invested Tibetan clerics not only with bilingual symbols of power that included Tibetan script, but also with seals like the one shown below. Since the original photograph (left) does not show the seal impression but the seal base, and the letters appear therefore mirror inverted, I have flipped the image horizontally (right, true shape of the symbols). The script might look like Tibetan at first glance:



Figure 6. Seal base (left) and seal impression (right) for the Tibetan Karmapa (early Ming)⁵²

⁵⁰ Left: manuscript covers, red lacquer with engraved gold decoration. 72.4 x 26.7 cm. Right: the back of one of the 108 covers, names of the texts inscribed in both Chinese and Tibetan. Images: *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, accession number L.1996.47.35a,b. See Silk, Jonathan A. (1996), “Notes on the History of the Yongle Kanjur,” in *Suhrlekhāh: Festgabe für Helmut Eimer*, ed. Michael Hahn et al. (Swistal-Odendorf: Indica et Tibetica Verlag), 153-200; Jiacao 嘉措 et al. (1985), “Lasa xiancang de liang bu Yongle ban Ganzhuer 拉萨现藏的两部永乐版《甘珠尔》 [The Two Yongle Versions of the *Kangyur* Extant in Lhasa],” *Wenwu* 文物 9, 85-88.

⁵¹ The symbolic aspects of linguistic knowledge will be analysed further in Chapter Three.

⁵² Image: from Chen Qingying 陳慶英 (2003), *Tibetan History* (Beijing: Wuzhou chuanbo chubanshe), 45.

Reading the seal impression from top to bottom and from left to right, we discover that while the first three of the four symbols look similar to the Tibetan letters ཀ (*ka*), ར (*ra*), and མ (*ma*), the last one is definitely not Tibetan. Chen Qingying 陳慶英, who provides the photograph of the seal, does not comment on the script, but a consultation of the *Handbook of 'Phags-pa Chinese* reveals that all four symbols on the seal undoubtedly belong to the Phagspa alphabet and spell the word *garamaba* (the Tibetan clerical title *karmapa* ཀརྨམ་པ་).⁵³

It is remarkable that Phagspa, the ‘international’ writing system of the Mongol world, was still used in the early Ming, as it had been the preeminent symbol of Mongol supremacy on the level of written language.⁵⁴ Created on the basis of the Tibetan script when the Yuan rose to power, officially in order to “transcribe all writing systems, simply to enable smooth communication” [為蒙古新字，譯寫一切文字，期於順言達事而已], it also symbolised the unity of the empire and its diverse populations.⁵⁵ While it is generally accepted that “with the fall of the [Yuan] dynasty, it [the Phagspa script] disappeared,”⁵⁶ we must admit that this is not the whole story. While the above statement is true in the sense that the Ming did not try to keep Phagspa as a written *lingua franca*, it did not disappear completely and had its afterlife as one of many ‘ghosts’ from the Mongol era. This is all the more significant as for some Chinese scholars Phagspa was an eternal reminder that they were under foreign rule. Being consciously designed in the sense of a true phonetic alphabet, Phagspa made Chinese characters (in theory) superfluous. Thus, for the author of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* preface of 1389, the fact that Phagspa edicts of the Mongols “employed Chinese language, only the script was different” [惟華言是從，而書獨異者] was “a cause for wariness and distrust” [猜防

⁵³ Weldon South Coblin (2007), *A Handbook of 'Phags-pa Chinese* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press). On Tibetan seal impressions in Phagspa script, see Dieter Schuh (1981), *Grundlagen tibetischer Siegelkunde: Eine Untersuchung über tibetische Siegelaußschriften in Phagspa-Schrift* (Sankt Augustin: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag).

⁵⁴ On the Phagspa script, see Coblin’s indispensable *Handbook* of 2007, and the work of Junast (Zhaonasi 照那斯圖, 1934-2010). Junast (1980), “Lun Basibazi 論八思巴字 [On the Phagspa Writing System],” *Minzu yuwen* 民族語文 1, 37-43; and (1990-1991), *Basibazi he Mengguyu wenxian* 八思巴字和蒙古語文獻 [Documents in Mongolian Language Written in Phagspa Script] (Tokyo: Tōkyō Gaikokugo Daigaku Ajia Afurika Gengo Bunka Kenkyūjo).

⁵⁵ Kublai edict of 1269, in *Yuanshi* 元史 [History of the Yuan], *juan* 202, 4518. Mongolian, Chinese, Tibetan, Uyghur, and even Sanskrit were written in Phagspa. See Erich Haenisch (1957), “Die Schriftfrage im Mongolischen Ostreich,” in *Oriente Poliano: Studi e conferenze tenute all’ Is. M.E.O. in occasione del VII centenario della nascita di Marco Polo, 1254-1954*, ed. Etienne Balazs (Rom: Istituto italiano per il Medio e Estremo Oriente), 103-110.

⁵⁶ Morris Rossabi (1994), “The Reign of Khubilai Khan,” in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol VI: *Alien Regimes and Border States, 907-1368*, ed. Herbert Franke & Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 467.

之心有在也].⁵⁷ In other words, under the Yuan, ideas of cultural relations had been radically altered, after a self-consciously foreign people had dominated the whole of ‘China proper’ and had lowered Chinese to the status of *one language among others* that could transmit the imperial will.

Being inextricably linked to Kublai Khan, Phagspa script as inscribed in the seal shown above (Figure 6) is the perfect symbol for the early Ming’s wish to follow in the footsteps of the Mongol Khan by speaking and writing his languages. Remarkably, Phagspa inscriptions appear on Ming porcelains as late as in the Zhengde 正德 era (1505-1521).⁵⁸ Both Phagspa and its ancestor script, Tibetan, are cases for scripts with very strong symbolic dimensions, pointing directly to the Mongol past. We shall now focus on a language which is less important for symbolic and more for practical reasons: the language of a new Chinese ‘colony,’ Yunnan.

4. Yunnan’s languages

The establishment of the *Baiyi guan* 百夷館 [*Department for Baiyi languages*] within the *Bureau of Translators* must equally be understood as part of the early Ming’s dealing with the Yuan legacy. *Baiyi* ‘hundred barbarians,’ of course, is an exonym. An extant late Ming *Baiyi*-Chinese glossary shows that the *Baiyi* called themselves *Liu Dai* 六歹, meaning *Luk Tai* ‘children of the Tai people’:

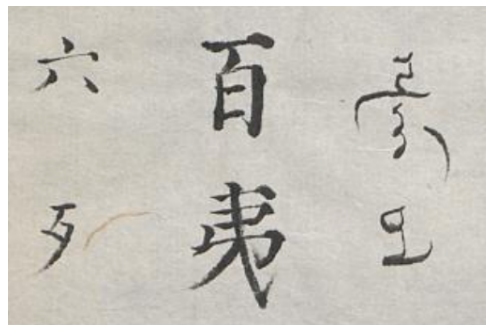


Figure 7. The word *Baiyi* 百夷 ‘hundred barbarians’ in *Baiyi* language⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Liu (1971 [1389]), *Preface to the Chinese-Barbarian Translations*, 3.

⁵⁸ Lü (2001), “Basibazi kuan qinghua ciqi.”

⁵⁹ The Chinese transcription of the *Baiyi* word for *Baiyi* can be seen in the left column: *liu dai* 六歹, or *Luk Tai*. The middle column has the Chinese lemma ‘*Baiyi*.’ The right column shows the word *Luk Tai* written in *Baiyi* (Ahom) script. Image: ‘Hirth Ms. 1,’ *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin*, vol. III, book 7, fol. 10r. For a linguistic analysis of the *Baiyi* material in this glossary, see Müller (1892), “Vocabularien,” and (1894), “Ein Brief in Pa-yi-Schrift.”

The *Inspection of the Bureau of Translators* identifies the language of this department as one of the Yunnan region: “The hundred barbarians are located in the southwest of Yunnan. Since the days of old, they had no contact with the Central Realm” [百夷在雲南之西南。自古不通中國].⁶⁰ Walter Fuchs has shown, in particular, that all place names in *Baiyi* glossaries refer to towns in what is today Yunnan: a set of Tai polities invaded and absorbed by the early Ming in 1382.⁶¹ ‘Yunnan’ and ‘Baiyi’ in early Ming sources overlap. *Baiyi* was the Tai polity Mong Mao along the Burmese-Chinese border, including parts of today’s southwest Yunnan, which was attacked by Ming troops with firearms in 1387 and described by Chinese envoys in the *Baiyi zhuan* 百夷傳 [*Account of the One Hundred Barbarians*] in 1396.⁶² Examining the subchapter titles in the *Baiyi* chapter in the *Inspection of the Bureau of Translators* (Appendix D), we can identify places that belong to modern Yunnan, such as Heqing 鶴慶, but also at least five polities that were the remnants of the larger Tai state Mong Mao after the Ming had broken it down into smaller territories under separate rulers: Mengyang 孟養, Mengding 孟定 (*meng* 孟 being a transcription of *muang* or *mueang* ‘district, country,’ which exists in several Tai-Kadai languages⁶³), Ganya 干崖, Wandian 灣甸, and Dahou 大侯.⁶⁴ The native rulers of these new polities were known as *tusi* 土司 ‘local offices,’ again a system created by the Mongols after their initial conquest of the region and expanded by the Ming.

The *Baiyi* department, therefore, has to be seen within the context of ‘Chinese colonialism,’ as set out in the Introduction. As I have argued, the Ming’s attempt, in 1406, to conquer Đại Việt (North Vietnam) and make it a Chinese province represents the unsuccessful case of such colonialism. Just as for Yunnan, Mongol China set a precedent, by attacking Đại Việt in 1287, but the Ming assault was more intensive.⁶⁵ Its side effects included Mongol-style capture of artisans, the establishment of ‘Confucian’ schools with Ming personnel in Đại Việt, and opportunities for

⁶⁰ Wang (1972 [ca. 1580]), *Inspection*, first sentence of the chapter “*Baiyi guan* 百夷館.”

⁶¹ Walter Fuchs (1931), “Remarks on a New ‘Hua-I-I-Yu’ [華夷譯語],” *Bulletin of the Catholic University of Peking* 8, 91-97, esp. the *Baiyi guan* material on p. 93.

⁶² See Geoff Wade (2008), “Engaging the South: Ming China and Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 51, 584-585.

⁶³ Müller (1892), “Vocabularien,” 18; see p. 17 for concrete examples.

⁶⁴ Compare to the list of polities in Wade (2008), “Engaging the South,” 585.

⁶⁵ For the Ming campaigns into Vietnam, see Kathlene Baldanza (2016), *Ming China and Vietnam: Negotiating Borders in Early Modern Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 49-76; John Whitmore (1985), *Vietnam, Hồ Quý Ly, and the Ming (1371-1421)* (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies). On the colonial nature of the Chinese invasion and occupation, see Geoff Wade, “Ming Colonial Armies in 15th-Century Southeast Asia” in Karl Hack & Tobias Rettig (eds.) (2006), *Colonial Armies in Southeast Asia* (London: Routledge), 73-104.

Vietnamese students in China.⁶⁶ As a result, one chief architect of the new Forbidden City in Beijing, Nguyen An 阮安, was Vietnamese.⁶⁷ While this war ended in 1427 with a defeat for the Ming, Yunnan can be seen as the successful case of early Ming colonialism. Mongol-led subjugation of the area in 1253 had been followed by a first wave of Chinese immigration. As it was early Ming strategy to trim imperial territory from a Mongol-based Eurasian empire back to ‘China proper,’ it makes sense that, in 1369, the Ming recognised Yunnan as a separate polity by sending “imperial decrees” [詔諭] to “Yunnan, Japan, and other countries” [雲南日本等國].⁶⁸ In 1382, however, Yunnan was seized from the Mongols in a massive and bloody invasion. The 250,000 Chinese troops demobilised *in situ* and either brought in their wives or married local women. The Hongwu administration ‘opened’ the area to a second wave of immigration, moved some million Ming subjects into Yunnan, recruited natives as soldiers, and appropriated copper, silver, gold, and other resources.⁶⁹ I find it difficult to come up with a better word to describe these processes than ‘colonialism,’ even if things did not proceed exactly as in European cases. There are similar themes in global history and our terminology should be flexible enough to accommodate global dimensions.

As a result, studying the languages of ‘Yunnan’ meant not only studying ‘foreign’ languages but also the languages of a new part of the Ming empire’s population. Formerly independent Southeast Asian polities were absorbed and their languages studied in the *Bureau of Translators* due to administrative needs. Taking this argument one step further, it could be applied to most, if not all of the languages studied in the *Bureau*: they were not just ‘foreign languages,’ as we usually read in the secondary literature, but also *languages of the Ming*, spoken in the empire proper and in its borderlands.⁷⁰ Mongolian, for example, was not just important in diplomacy but also the language of communities from Yuan times and new immigrants. A similar case could be made for Persian, which had been a *lingua franca* of Muslims in Yuan China. Thus, the role of Mongolian and Persian in the early Ming will be analysed in the next and final section of this chapter.

⁶⁶ Wade (2008), “Engaging the South,” 588-590.

⁶⁷ On Nguyen An, see Tsai (1996), *Eunuchs in the Ming*, 34, 202-205; Brantly Womack (2006), *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 127.

⁶⁸ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Hongwu, *juan* 39, 784.

⁶⁹ See Dardess (2012), *Resilient Empire*, 5-6.

⁷⁰ For example, Ma (1995), “History of Translation in China,” 373, and Ralf Kauz (2005), “Postal Stations in Ming China,” in *Trade and Transfer across the East Asian ‘Mediterranean’*, ed. Angela Schottenhammer (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz), 86 note 60, speak of “foreign languages” only.

5. Mongolian and Persian

No language status planner could have ignored the significance of the Mongols and their language despite the Ming's victory in 1368. As most important documents had been written in Mongolian in Yuan times (although, in theory, normally accompanied by Chinese translations), a great part of written Yuan legacy must have existed in that language.⁷¹ Ongoing communication was also crucial, as Mongols at the borders were perceived as a continual threat and Mongols who decided to join the Ming as an asset. Most non-Chinese correspondence in the Ming was thus Mongolian, the most obvious example of Yuan legacy in the sphere of language.⁷² Consequently, the *Dada* 鞑靼 department of the *Bureau of Translators* dealt with Mongolian, the language of the first bilingual glossary compiled by the Ming, the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* of 1389.⁷³ In particular, Mongolian was one language of a trilingual stele (1413), erected by the Ming envoy Yishiha (see Chapter One) beyond the northern frontier, and of a bilingual edict (1453) issued by the Ming to the Persian prince of Lar, near Hormuz.⁷⁴ This edict either reflects the Ming's belief that Mongolian still had the same importance in Central Eurasia as when the Mongols ruled Persia—or it was used for ornamental reasons (see Chapter Three) in order to evoke the glory of the Yuan:



Figure 8. Bilingual edict to the prince of Lar (1453): date in Chinese and Mongolian⁷⁵

⁷¹ Elizabeth Endicott-West (1989), *Mongolian Rule in China: Local Administration in the Yuan Dynasty* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press), 83.

⁷² Serruys (1967), *Sino-Mongol Relations* II, 446.

⁷³ To be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

⁷⁴ Louis Ligeti (1961), “Les inscriptions djurtchen de Tyr,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 12, 5-26; Francis Woodman Cleaves (1950), “The Sino-Mongolian Edict of 1453 in the Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 13, 431-446.

⁷⁵ This detail shows the date, given in Chinese as “the twenty-ninth day of the eleventh month of the third year of Jingtai (8 January 1453)” [景泰三年十一月二十九日] on the right, and in Mongolian on the left. Image from Cleaves (1950), “Edict of 1453,” 431-446, which contains a complete facsimile.

The significance of Mongolian is further illustrated by developments within the Jurchen language communities. At some point in early Ming times, the Jurchens discarded their script and decided to use Mongolian instead, which had acquired prestige as the writing system of the Mongol world even in its westernmost corners.⁷⁶ Two Jurchen commandants of the borderlands, named Sashengha 撒升哈 and Tuotumudalu 脫脫木荅魯, complained in 1444 that “in the forty garrisons there is no-one who knows the Jurchen script. We request that from now on only the Mongolian script be used in all official documents” [四十衛無識女直字者，乞自後勅文之類，第用達達字從之].⁷⁷ As so often, the source is not differentiating between language as such and the script used to translate it into writing. Do the Jurchens request texts that are ‘completely Mongolian’ (Mongolian language and script)? If so, there were either enough Mongolian-speaking Jurchens or they had capable translators. Or should further correspondence be in Jurchen *written in* Mongolian? In that case, the commandants would recommend Mongolian for a role similar to the Latin alphabet in Europe or Phagspa under the Mongols, as one script that could be adapted to many languages.⁷⁸ In any event, the source clearly points to the relevance of Mongolian and, through the ‘normality’ with which it demands another script, to the multilingual flexibility of the Ming court.

At first glance, early Ming Chinese studying Mongolian seem to embody a break with Yuan traditions. According to Rossabi, Kublai Khan “tried to keep the Chinese from learning the Mongol language” and “the Chinese were, at various times, forbidden to learn Mongol.”⁷⁹ Indeed, a decree issued in 1337 states that it is “forbidden for *Han* and *Nan* people to study the Mongol and the *Semu* scripts” [禁漢人、南人不得習學蒙古、色目文字].⁸⁰ This decree, however, seems to be the only one ever issued. Moreover, Rossabi’s phrasing must be viewed critically on the backdrop of his general over-emphasis on tendencies to segregate Chinese and

⁷⁶ István Vásáry (1987), “Bemerkungen zum Uygurischen Schrifttum in der Goldenen Horde und bei den Timuriden,” *Ural-Altaische Jahrbücher* 7 (1987), 115-126.

⁷⁷ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Zhengtong, *juan* 130, 2276; dated 3 March 1444.

⁷⁸ It is also possible that the source, talking about a ‘Mongolian script’ [達達字], does not refer to the Uyghur-based Mongolian script, but to Phagspa. After all, Chinese primary sources of the time refer to the Phagspa script variously as ‘new Mongolian script’ [蒙古新字], ‘Mongolian script’ [蒙古字], and ‘Mongolian seal script’ [蒙古篆字]. See Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp (1996), “The Tibetan Script and Derivatives,” in *The World’s Writing Systems*, ed. Peter T. Daniels & William Bright (New York: Oxford University Press), 437. The question must remain open at present.

⁷⁹ Rossabi (1988), *Khubilai Khan*, 172 and 154.

⁸⁰ *Yuan History*, *juan* 39, 1349.

Mongols.⁸¹ Other evidence suggests that Yuan-era Chinese did indeed study Mongolian as a means of career advancement. As Elizabeth Endicott-West has shown, Chinese were permitted to study the language at the *Menggu guozixue* 蒙古國子學 [*Mongol Imperial College*], established under Kublai in Beijing, as well as at local-level Mongolian language schools, or *Menggu zixue* 蒙古字學.⁸² The 1337 decree, therefore, might have been a late, and probably fruitless attempt to reverse preexisting patterns. From this perspective, early Ming Chinese studying Mongolian do no longer appear as a novelty *per se*. The novelty is that Mongol-Chinese cultural relations had changed after 1368 and, consequently, institutional context and motives of such language study. The imperial commission of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* (1389), ‘Mongolian studies’ in the *Dada guan* of the *Bureau of Translators*, and the phonetic transcription of the Mongolian-language *Secret History* into Chinese, show that early Ming actors were intent to create repositories of knowledge about the language of their predecessors.⁸³ While Chinese was *de facto* reinstituted as the major imperial language, former imperial languages, such as Mongolian, were integrated into the early Ming treasury of linguistic knowledge and ability.

The same is true for Persian, or *Huihui* 回回, as a former Yuan imperial language. As Liu Yingsheng has shown, Persian had at times been the common language of Muslims in Yuan China and, along with Mongolian and Chinese, one of the three *de facto* ‘official’ languages.⁸⁴ In 1407, it was one language of the Pentaglot Halima Account (Figure 2) and of a trilingual edict, protecting Muslim clerics within the empire.⁸⁵ Since 1407 it was also studied at the *Huihui* department of the *Bureau*

⁸¹ While Rossabi asserts, for example, that Kublai “attempted to discourage fraternisation between the Mongols and Chinese” and even “forbade inter-marriage between the two peoples” (Rossabi [1988], *Khubilai Khan*, 172), most scholars agree that none of the Yuan emperors ever issued any regulations banning intermarriage. See Endicott-West (1989), *Local Administration in the Yuan*, 123, 177 note 70.

⁸² Endicott-West (1989), *Local Administration in the Yuan*, 84-85.

⁸³ These works will be discussed as case studies in Chapter Five. On the *Secret History*, see William Hung (1951), “The Transmission of the Book Known as the Secret History of the Mongols,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 14, 433-492. For a modern edition, turn to Anonymous (author) & Igor de Rachewiltz (translator & editor) (2004-2013), *The Secret History of the Mongols: A Mongolian Epic Chronicle of the Thirteenth Century*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill).

⁸⁴ Liu Yingsheng (2013), “Bosiyu zai Dongya de Huangjin Shidai de kaiqi ji zhongjie 波斯語在東亞的黃金時代的開啓及終結 [Beginning and End of the Golden Era of the Persian Language in East Asia],” *Xinjiang Shifan Daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 新疆師範大學學報(哲學社會科學版) 34, 70-79; (2010), “A Lingua Franca along the Silk Road: Persian Language in China between the 14th and the 16th Centuries,” in Kauz, *Maritime Silk Road*, 87-95; and (2008), ‘*Huihui guan zazi’yu* ‘*Huihui guan yiyu’yanjiu* 回回館雜字與回回館譯語研究 [*A Study on two Sino-Persian Glossaries*]’ (Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin Daxue chubanshe). See also Huang Shijian (2009), “The Persian Language in China during the Yuan Dynasty,” in *Islam in China: Key Papers*, ed. Michael Dillon (Folkestone), 162-170.

⁸⁵ In Chinese, Persian, and Mongolian. See Haufler (2014), “Miracles and Salvation,” 208.

of *Translators*. In 1409, it appeared on the Galle Trilingual Stele: probably inscribed in Nanjing and issued in the name of the Ming emperor in Persian, Chinese and Tamil, the stele was erected by Zheng He's fleet outside the empire, on Sri Lanka.⁸⁶ To be sure, *Huihui* is a vague term and we could not know that it referred to Persian in the early Ming without additional evidence.⁸⁷ It designated broadly Jews, Nestorian Christians (*shizi huihui* 十字回回, 'Huihui of the cross'), and Muslims in Tang times, and still rather vaguely 'Muslim; Persian; Arabic' in the Ming. Thus, a Ming-era text written in the 'Huihui script' might, theoretically, have been written in either Persian or Arabic, perhaps even in Uyghur or other languages Ming writers would associate with Muslims.

The ambiguity of the term *Huihui* was carried over into modern scholarship. For example, the Chinese Muslim Ma Huan states about his role in Zheng He's naval expeditions that he "had the duty to translate foreign documents" [以通譯番書] but does not name any language(s) involved.⁸⁸ According to Wang Gongwu, Ma was "sufficiently literate, both in Chinese and Arabic."⁸⁹ Dreyer agrees that Ma was "proficient in the Arabic that was the *lingua franca* of seafarers from South China to the African coast."⁹⁰ Liu Yingsheng, on the other hand, states that Ma was "probably a Persian-speaking Muslim."⁹¹ Surprisingly, no scholar considered that Ma might have been familiar with both languages. If he stemmed from a 'Mongol migration background' family with Persian-Muslim ancestors, he would inevitably know some Arabic as the theoretically untranslatable language of the Quran. Conversely, if Ma was a Chinese convert to Islam, he might have learned some Arabic as the language of the mosque—and in both cases possibly some Persian as the *lingua franca* of Muslims in Yuan China. That Arabic played a role at least as a liturgical language in the early Ming linguistic landscape is confirmed by a Quran which was, according to its colophon, completed in Khanbaliq (Beijing) on the last day of Muḥarram in the year 804 (that is, 9 October 1401):

⁸⁶ The Galle Trilingual Stele will be discussed in Chapter Three.

⁸⁷ Raphael Israeli (2002), *Islam in China: Religion, Ethnicity, Culture, and Politics* (Lanham: Lexington Books), 303.

⁸⁸ Ma (1937 [1451]), *Yingya shenglan*, page 1 of the preface (*xu* 序).

⁸⁹ Wang Gungwu (1976), "Ma Huan," in *Dictionary of Ming Biography 1368-1644*, vol. II, ed. Luther C. Goodrich & Fang Chaoying (New York: Columbia University Press), 1026-1027.

⁹⁰ Dreyer (2006), *Zheng He*, 7.

⁹¹ Liu (2010), "Lingua Franca," 94.



Figure 9. Arabic as a liturgical language: pages from a Quran, created 1401 in Beijing⁹²

However, my investigation of the late Ming glossary ‘Hirth Ms. 1’ shows that the so-called ‘*Huihui* language,’ at least in this case, is *not* Arabic, but clearly Persian. For the early Ming, the same state of affairs seems probable, as the distinct *Bureau of Translators* departments, once set up in 1407, would hardly suddenly study other languages under the same department name. This assumption is supported by the fact that the late Ming Mongolian-Chinese material in ‘Hirth Ms. 1’ was, in all samples I compared so far, word-for-word identical with the early Ming Palace edition of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* (1389). A look at the first four entries of the category *Tianwen men* 天文門 [Heavenly Patterns] will suffice to establish Persian as the ‘*Huihui* language’ (Figure 10):

⁹² Written by a certain Hajji Rashād ibn ‘Ali al-Ṣīnī in the ‘Great Mosque of Khanbaliq,’ commonly known as the *Niujie si* 牛街寺 (Ox Street Mosque). Image from Clunas & Harrison-Hall (2014), *Ming*, 208.

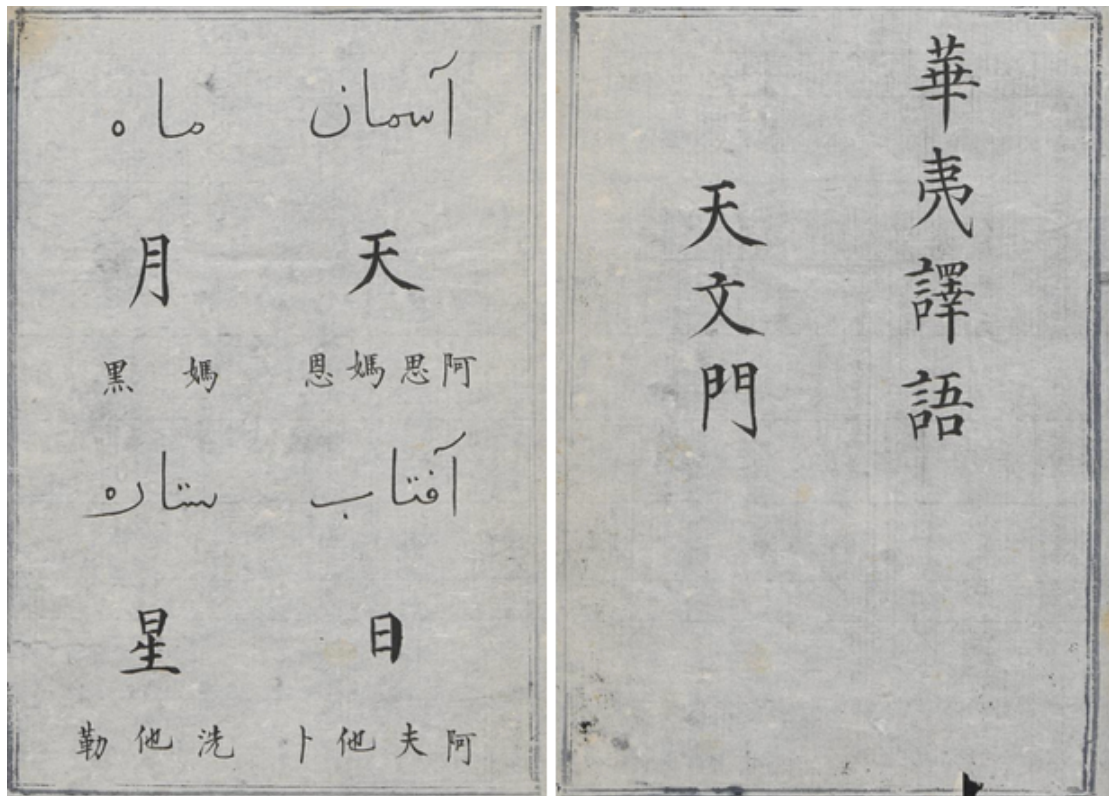


Figure 10. First two folios of the *Huihui* (Persian) section in a late Ming glossary⁹³

As can be seen in Figure 10, the word 天 (heaven) is translated as *asima'en* 阿思媽恩, corresponding to Persian *āsmān* آسمان. For 日 (sun) we have *afutabu* 阿夫他卜, which equals Persian *āftāb* آفتاب. The word 月 (moon) is translated as *mahei* 媽黑 (Pers. *māh* ماه), the word 星 (star) as *xitale* 洗他勒 (Pers. *setāre* ستاره).⁹⁴ This vocabulary proves that the so-called ‘*Huihui* language’ is Persian. Some peculiarities stand out, for instance the unusual form of the letter ن in the word آسمان, with the dot over ن placed very far to the right. Also, in ستاره, the letter ه, contrary to custom, is placed *inside* the letter ر. This might point to an emergent or deteriorating practice of writing, or it might just result from the fact that scribes used a Chinese brush instead of a *qalam*, the traditional reed pen used in Perso-Arabic calligraphy. While this question might illuminate the *Bureau* development from a palaeographic viewpoint, it must remain unanswered at present.

As the Mongol contacts with the Islamic world had gone mainly through Iran, Persian had also become a language of science and a major *lingua franca* in the

⁹³ First two folios of the *Huihui* section in the late Ming glossary *Huayi yiyu* 華夷譯語 in the *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin*. Hirth Ms. 1, vol. II, book 6, fol. 1r° and 1v°. The work is not to be confused with the homonymous Mongolian-Chinese glossary of 1389. *Huayi yiyu* or simply *yiyu* became a general term for bilingual glossaries of this kind.

⁹⁴ Hirth Ms. 1, *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin*, vol. II, book 6, fol. 1r°.

Islamic Astronomical Bureau of Yuan China.⁹⁵ Thus, early Ming adaptations of astronomical treatises, bequeathed by the Mongols through the Khanbaliq imperial library, followed a pattern of relay translation that was a Yuan legacy as well. They were based on Persian translations of Arabic originals—and not directly on Arabic texts, as was assumed by scholars such as Joseph Needham (1900-1995) and Li Nanqiu 黎難秋.⁹⁶ The source language is revealed through text-internal evidence in the *Islamic Astronomy* translation: terms that are transcribed from their “original language” [本音] are clearly Persian, not Arabic. For example, the name of the first month is given as *Farwording* 法兒幹兒丁, which is decidedly a transcription of the corresponding Persian term *Farvardīn* and not of the Arabic equivalent *al-Muḥarram*, which was used in the early Ming Quran shown above. Likewise, the second month is called *Ardibixishi* 阿兒的比喜世 (Pers. *Ordībehesht*), not Ar. *Ṣafar*. The first day of the week is called *Yeshanbie* 也閃別 (Pers. *Yek-shanbe*) instead of Ar. *al-ʿAḥad*.⁹⁷ The same is true for the remaining names of months and days. The names of ‘Western’ instruments transcribed in the *Yuan History* are equally mostly Persian, e.g. *kulai yi arzi* 苦來亦阿兒子 for Persian *korreh-ye ārz*, literally ‘sphere of the earth,’ denoting a terrestrial globe.⁹⁸

Beyond its role as a language of science, Persian was, just as Mongolian, crucial in early Ming diplomacy where it was used on a surprisingly wide scale, even with the southern Thai polity of Ayutthaya.⁹⁹ The significance of Persian is exemplified by the Chinese envoy Chen Cheng 陳誠 who travelled to the Timurid capital Herat (Afghanistan) in 1414-1415 and left the *Xiyu fanguo zhi* 西域番國志 [*Report on the Foreign Countries of the Western Regions*] (1415). In this work, he

⁹⁵ Park (2012), *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds*, 99. On the *Islamic Astronomical Bureau*, see Chapter One.

⁹⁶ Joseph Needham (1959), *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. III: *Mathematics and the Sciences of the Heavens and the Earth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 49. Li Nanqiu 黎難秋 (2006), *Zhongguo kexue fanyi shi* 中國科學翻譯史 [*A History of Scientific Translation in China*] (Hefei: Hunan jiaoyu chubanshe), 229, equals “huihui script” [回回文] with “Arabic” [阿拉伯文].

⁹⁷ The transcriptions from Persian are included in one of the several extant versions of the *Islamic System of Mathematical Astronomy*, the *Qizheng tuibu* 七政推步 [*Calculation of the Motion of the Seven Celestial Bodies*] of 1477. See Ma Shanyihei et al. (authors/translators) & Bei Lin 貝琳 (ed.), *Qizheng tuibu* (1996 [1477]), in Ma & Chen, *Zhongguo huihui lifa jicong*, 516. See also the whole translated passage in Appendix A.

⁹⁸ *Yuan History*, juan 48, 998-999, ch. *Xiyu yixiang* 西域儀象 [*Astronomical Instruments from the Western Regions*]. On this entry, see Willy Hartner (1950), “The Astronomical Instruments of Cha-ma-lu-ting, their Identification, and Their Relations to the Instruments of the Observatory of Marāgha,” *Isis* 41, 190-191; Liu (2008), “Lingua Franca,” 90.

⁹⁹ This can be inferred from later developments. In the *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Chenghua, juan 2, 36 (an entry of 1487), envoys sent by the king of Ayutthaya state that “under the former regulations, our country’s foreign (i.e. native!) script and the *huihui* script were both used” [舊例本國番字與回回字互用] in communication with the Ming court.

carefully transcribes the sound of around thirty Persian words into Chinese characters, providing a mini-vocabulary for the use of future envoys. The ruler, Chen explains, is called *sulutan* 鎮魯檀 (Pers. *soltān*, king) and his officials *diaowan* 刁完 (Pers. *divān*). Once every seven days, people assemble to trade late into the night in the light of candles and lanterns: this is called a “*bazar* 巴咱兒” (Pers. *bāzār*).¹⁰⁰ The fact that Chen, in his official role as diplomat, acted also as word collector suggests that he expected an interested audience at home. He was surely aware of the early Ming endeavour to train a multilingual corps of officials in the *Bureau of Translators*, which had been founded only seven years before his embassy was sent into the Western Regions. His vocabulary, a provisional outline created literally on the road, represents one of the many channels through which the Ming could acquire knowledge about foreign languages.

6. Conclusion

This chapter has elucidated the ways in which the early Ming linguistic landscape was a Mongol legacy. It contributes to discussions in scholarship of the last decades by establishing the linguistic landscape as a distinct field of legacy, in addition to other such fields that had been discovered and examined earlier, such as customs (Serruys), the Ming military (Serruys, Taylor, Dreyer), martial spectacles (Robinson), and cosmopolitanism in general (Robinson, Clunas, Brook).¹⁰¹ This chapter has shown how several of the languages and scripts studied in the early Ming *Bureau of Translators* were entangled with the Yuan heritage, especially Persian and Mongolian, but also Tibetan and languages of Yunnan. Remarkable cases on the level of specific writing systems are Phagspa, the global script of the Mongol empire, and Lantsa—a script used to write Sanskrit, popularised under Mongol rule—which were both used in early Ming inscriptions and multilingual artefacts. Another Yuan tradition the Ming took up was the use of Uyghur as *lingua franca* in communication with Central Eurasian polities, which cannot be explored due to constraints of space.

¹⁰⁰ Chen (1991 [1415]), *Xiyu xingcheng ji & Xiyu fanguo zhi*. There is a partial translation into English by Morris Rossabi (1983), “A Translation of Ch’en Ch’eng’s *Hsi-yü fan-kuo chih*,” *Ming Studies* 17, 49-59. On Chen, see the extensive study by Michel Didier (2012), *Chen Cheng (1365-1457): Ambassadeur des premiers empereurs Ming* (Leuven: Peeters). Chen’s Persian vocabulary is listed in Felicia J. Hecker (1993), “A Fifteenth-Century Chinese Diplomat in Herat,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3, 92, table 1.

¹⁰¹ Serruys (1957), “Remains of Mongol Customs,” (1959), *Sino-Mongol Relations I*; Taylor (1969), “Yuan Origins; Dreyer (1982), *Early Ming China*; Robinson (2008), *Ming Court*, and (2013), *Martial Spectacles*; Brook (2010), *Troubled Empire*; Clunas & Harrison-Hall (2014), *Ming*.

As a whole, this chapter illustrated how for the new dynasty language and translation policies harmonised the needs for both continuity *and* a break. While Chinese was *de facto* reinstituted as the major imperial language—meaning that, unlike under the Yuan, edicts were not automatically issued in bilingual form—, former imperial languages (Mongolian, Persian) were integrated into the early Ming treasury of linguistic knowledge and ability.

Languages and scripts were significant in different ways. Due to the lack of a long written tradition, there were no complex treatises in Mongolian as there were in Persian.¹⁰² Mongolian, however, was crucial in diplomacy, not just with Mongols. Persian had an even larger zone of influence: it appears in basic *yiyu*-glossaries, translated literature (the Arabic-to-Persian-to-Chinese pattern of relay translation was a Yuan legacy as well), and diplomacy, where it was used widely, even with the Thai kingdom of Ayutthaya. The languages of Yunnan, again, were not ‘foreign languages’ proper but important because ‘Yunnan,’ formerly a set of independent Tai polities, had been absorbed by Ming China in a continuation of colonial enterprises begun by the Yuan. Status planning is also visible in the *absence* of languages from the *Bureau* curriculum, including Tamil (used in Ming diplomacy on Sri Lanka), Malay (which must have been crucial for the early Ming maritime expeditions), and Arabic (used by Ming subjects as a liturgical language but not necessarily spoken outside the mosque).¹⁰³ Korean, Vietnamese and Japanese were not included either, due to their status as *tongwen* ‘identical script’ languages: the relevant polities used literary Chinese. *Tongwen* languages were not considered *Yi*, barbarian, and thus not studied in the *Bureau of Translators*—after all, a customary rendering for *Bureau for the Barbarians of the Four Cardinal Directions* (*Siyi guan*). Still, languages that fell outside status planning were significant and, to some extent, included in the Ming’s multilingual ability: that the Galle Stele was prepared at home before being erected abroad shows that the Ming had scribes able to write in less global languages, such as Tamil, not studied in a distinct *Bureau* department. Precisely these departments, I have argued further, should be seen as a major innovation of the *Bureau*.

¹⁰² Texts on astrology and divination written in Mongolian all date from later periods, not earlier than the late sixteenth century. See Elisabetta Chiodo (2000), *The Mongolian Manuscripts on Birch Bark from Xarbuxyn Balgas in the Collection of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz), 200-247.

¹⁰³ Malacca on the Southern Malay Peninsula was a port Zheng He’s fleet called at on most expeditions. For an early Ming Chinese-Malay glossary, see E. D. Edwards & C. O. Blagden (1931), “A Chinese Vocabulary of Malacca Malay Words and Phrases Collected Between A.D. 1403 and 1511(?),” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 6, 715-749.

In light of the evidence put forward in this chapter, the distinction between ‘multilingual foreign’ dynasties (Yuan, Qing) and ‘monolingual Chinese’ dynasties (Ming) seems unstable, to say the least.¹⁰⁴ Not only did we encounter multilingual edicts, steles, and printed books, the evidence even included material artefacts, such as porcelain, lacquerware, metalware, textiles, and seals with non-Chinese inscriptions. While the steles of Galle and Yongning speak to larger audiences abroad, works such as the Pentaglot Halima Account expect multilingual audiences at home. Those Ming audiences speak languages of a significant group of *Semu* people the Mongols had relied on (Persian), the language of a foreign religion the Mongols had integrated into Chinese court ritual (Tibetan), and the language of the Mongols themselves (Mongolian). The great variety of evidence presented suggests that such works are no ‘exceptions’ but belong to a systematic strand of multilingualism. The early Ming produced multiscrptual objects with a certain regularity. This is significant, as it points to a Yuan-Ming-Qing continuity that has been rather overlooked so far. Multilingualism, usually associated with ‘foreign’ regimes (Yuan, Qing) and not with ‘Chinese’ ones (Ming), could also be seen as a late imperial continuity: sometimes more visible and more pronounced (Yuan, Qing) and sometimes less (Ming, especially in its founding phase), it always existed as an undercurrent of Chinese empires. While Waley-Cohen rightly sees Qing multilingualism as part of an “assertion of universal dominion” and an “attempt to claim the authority of multiple heritages,”¹⁰⁵ early Ming works such as the Pentaglot Halima Account clearly represent the same attempt.

One question has thus far remained in the background. The examples analysed in this chapter are mainly taken from court culture and imperial institutions. In LLS terminology, they constitute ‘top-down’ evidence. What about society as a whole? Recalling the initial Tibet-related examples of this chapter, a case can be made that the impact of Tibetan culture transcended the court. An entry in a late Ming historical work reports about commoners in the Chenghua era (1464-1487) who “excavated tombs to get skulls and skeletons for making *gebala* bowls [Tibetan *kapala*, skullcups] and pretended that they had been produced in Tibet. They made good profit on the market, as foolish people competed [to buy their wares]” [發人幕，取

¹⁰⁴ Hung (2005), “Translation in China,” and (2011), “Government Translators.”

¹⁰⁵ Joanna Waley-Cohen (2006), *The Culture of War in China: Empire and the Military under the Qing Dynasty* (London: I.B. Tauris), 11.

髑髏及頂骨以為葛巴刺碗，假謂之西番所產。乘時市利，愚民競趨之]。¹⁰⁶ Hence, there must have been a larger non-court market for ‘authentic’ Tibetan-Buddhist ritual objects—as a result of the ‘Tibet connection’ established by the Mongols and continued by the Ming. Other examples are related directly to language. As we shall see in Chapter Five, there were incidents of private language study in the early Ming which the court tried to suppress. Commoners studied Tibetan, or made their children study it, in order to gain employment as interpreters; some even used their language skills to pass as Tibetan monks or envoys.

In short, this chapter used the concept of linguistic landscape (LL) in the traditional sense (the totality of languages circulating) to draw attention to the written presence of languages in the Ming. In doing so, it challenged the notion of the monolingual Ming and examined *status planning* as *one* aspect of early Ming language policy. The next chapter focuses on a more particular aspect of language policy. It will apply LL in the more recently developed sense of Linguistic Landscape Studies and illustrate how languages examined in this chapter were ingredients of signs with specific language combinations. Distinguishing communicative (practical) and emblematic (symbolic) aspects of multilingualism, it will argue that both aspects were significant for the dynastic identity of the early Ming as a ‘universal empire.’

¹⁰⁶ Yu Jideng 余繼登 (1981 [1601]), *Huang Ming Diangu ji wen* 皇明典故紀聞 [*Institutions and Anecdotes of the Ming*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), *juan* 15, 278-279.

CHAPTER THREE

Purposes of multilingualism

This chapter builds on the insights gained in Chapters One and Two to explore further the role of multilingualism in the early Ming. While Chapter One showed how multilingual persons, often with ‘Mongol migration background,’ were employed by the new dynasty, Chapter Two discussed the languages of the *Bureau of Translators* curriculum as a case of status planning, an important element of language policy. While the first two chapters analysed the basic ‘ingredients’ (people and languages), Chapter Three focuses on more specific aspects of language policy and analyses different *functions* or *purposes* of multilingualism for the dynasty. To do so, we should first recall what we mean by ‘language policy’ in this context.

Although not all activities and events analysed in this thesis would have been perceived as connected by early Ming actors, I argue that they do collectively constitute a realm of action with a shared purpose. With that in mind, Robinson’s apt suggestion that the integration of Mongols and Jurchens into the Ming “formed one piece of a larger effort to establish a place for the (...) dynasty in Eurasia”¹ should be expanded: we can discern a host of activities which form another piece of the same effort in the sphere of language. Together they represent Ming ‘language policy,’ the *sum of decisions* regarding languages and translation, in particular: (1) to commission the translation of astronomical treatises, inherited through the Yuan imperial library; (2) to translate Mongolian literature and to create a Chinese-Mongolian glossary; (3) to found a *Bureau of Translators*; (4) to study eight particular languages in the *Bureau* and to omit others; (5) to continue the Mongol-era *Bureau of Interpreters*; (6) to create artistic works that address multilingual audiences; (7) to issue bilingual edicts; (8) to print literature and create artefacts involving non-Chinese languages, either as gifts for foreign rulers or as prestige objects for the Ming court; (9) to create multilingual steles to be installed outside the empire.²

My contention in this chapter is that all of these translation activities and multilingual texts had practical as well as symbolic aspects—or, in the terminology of Linguistic Landscape Studies (LLS), communicative and emblematic functions.³

¹ Robinson (2012), “Mongolian Migration,” 109.

² On ‘language policy,’ see also the introduction; on multilingual creations, see Chapter Two.

³ This distinction was first introduced in Landry & Bourhis (1997), “Linguistic Landscape.”

This chapter analyses the relationship between the two, in order to show how both were connected to the early Ming's universal imperial claim. It will first suggest that such a universal claim—until now, seldom associated with the Ming in scholarship—did indeed exist, continuing at times specific Mongol forms of universalism. This is important, as certain features of early Ming multilingualism could not be grasped without the universal claim. One aspect of universal empire, the 'tribute system' and translation within it, will be examined more closely. On that basis, the chapter looks at further purposes of translation, in which communicative and emblematic aspects increasingly overlap. Focusing on multilingual inscriptions, it applies the linguistic landscape (LL) concept in the specific sense of LLS, examining how languages were ingredients of multilingual signs with particular language combinations, and how these signs are evidence for the early Ming perceptions on the order of the world. By doing so, it continues concerns of earlier chapters—demonstrating that the Ming was not 'closed' and especially not monolingual—and, in particular, challenges the notion that "in contrast to their immediate [Yuan] predecessors, the Ming had little symbolic use for foreign scripts."⁴

1. The Ming as universal empire

Scholars see the Ming increasingly as part of a larger ensemble of post-Mongol societies in Eurasia. Allsen showed that it shared imperial culture, such as the royal hunt, with courts across Eurasia.⁵ I propose, based on Bang and Kołodziejczyk, to see the notion of universal empire as another shared repertoire of rule.⁶ This places the thesis in a global-historic context and is also necessary to get to the bottom of early Ming multilingualism. Universal empire and monolingualism would indeed be strange bedfellows and thus the Ming could not have been monolingual, even if they had wanted to. While universal empire, expressed through the Mandate of Heaven, had been a leitmotif for regimes in China long before the Manchu conquest, only the Qing is analysed in depth in Bang and Kołodziejczyk's edited volume and the Ming treated *en passant* in a series of empires throughout global history.⁷ A close look at

⁴ Crossley (1991), "Structure and Symbol," 59.

⁵ Allsen (2006), *Royal Hunt in Eurasian History*.

⁶ Bang & Kołodziejczyk (2012), *Universal Empire*.

⁷ Evelyn Rawski (2012), "Sons of Heaven: The Qing Appropriation of the Chinese Model of Universal Empire," in Bang & Kołodziejczyk (2012), *Universal Empire*, 233-252; the Ming is mentioned in Peter Fibiger Bang & Dariusz Kołodziejczyk (2012), "'Elephant of India': Universal Empire Through Time and Across Cultures," in *ibid.*, 8-9, 23.

the criteria for ‘universal empire’ will leave no doubt, however, that the Ming must indeed be included.⁸

The first criterion, control of extensive territories and rule over diverse populations, is met: Ming territory reached from the Mongolian steppe in the north to Yunnan’s mountains in the south, and from the desert of its westernmost frontier pass Yumenguan 玉門關 (Jade Gate) to a staggering 2,500 miles of coastal frontier in the east.⁹ Chapters One and Two have clarified the existence of diverse populations and multilingual audiences within the Ming. The second criterion, cosmopolitan literary cultures, is met in the form of literary Chinese, which is—as argued in Chapter Two—better described as a global East Asian textual tradition. Through it, the Ming, as with earlier empires, promoted cosmopolitan forms of discourse: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese scholars all shared it as a classical language. This exclusive idiom served as a means both of distinction and of communication across great distances and cultural barriers, just like Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, and other classical and imperial languages. The third criterion, the depiction of universal imperial rule as expression of cosmic and world order, is met by the emperor ruling as Son of Heaven (*Tianzi*). Even more, the dynastic name Ming itself continues a specific form of Mongol universalism. While earlier Chinese dynasties (Han, Tang, Song) were named after places, the Yuan chose a name based on an “idea” [義], as an edict of 1272 points out. Had Kublai Khan clung to tradition, he would have taken a name of a place outside of China proper, constantly pointing to his ‘outsiderhood’. By naming the dynasty *Yuan* 元 ‘the origin’ and identifying it with *qianyuan* 乾元, nothing less than ‘the original creative force’ of the universe, a new precedent was set, extending the universal pretensions of earlier regimes to their utmost limits.¹⁰ Hongwu, instead of going back to Chinese tradition and giving the dynasty a name such as *Huai* 淮, after the Huai river plain where he came from, followed the Mongol precedent by choosing a universal idea for it: *Ming* 明, ‘brightness.’

The fourth criterion, the claim of supremacy over numerous subject rulers through a shared political superstructure and symbolic forms of diplomacy, is met in the form of what scholars have called the ‘tributary system.’ This traditional form of foreign relations was often, as James Hevia rightly criticised, seen as a Chinese cultural peculiarity, but is less unique within cross-cultural notions of universal

⁸ For the criteria, see Bang & Kołodziejczyk (2012), “Elephant of India,” esp. 11, 27-33.

⁹ For a succinct description of Ming territory and its borderlands, see Dardess (2012), *Resilient Empire*, 1-24.

¹⁰ On the name Yuan, see Langlois (1981), “Introduction,” 3-5.

empire.¹¹ Its significance is that it provided a framework for early Ming actors in which they understood encounters with foreigners and their languages. As with other phenomena, such as immigration policies (see Chapter One), it is important to separate rhetoric and practice. I shall begin with rhetoric. The envoy Shen Zhi 沈秩, to give one example, leader of an embassy of 1370 to a polity called Boni 勃泥 (probably Borneo), reports that he ordered an interpreter to explain the Ming's superiority and universal reach to the king (*wang*) of that polity as follows:

The [Ming] emperor conquered all oceans. Wherever sun and moon do shine, wherever frost and dew do fall, [rulers] submitted memorials declaring themselves subjects. Boni is a place like a pea, does it really want to resist the Heavenly power [皇帝撫有四海，日月所照，霜露所墜，無不奉表稱臣。勃泥以彈丸之地，乃欲抗天威耶？]¹²

Similarly, when the king of Boni, Manarejiananai 麻那惹加那乃, fell ill on a visit to Nanjing in 1408, he articulated on his sickbed, again through an explicitly mentioned interpreter (*xiang* 象), the expected viewpoint of a subject of a universal empire: “Even though my place is far away from the imperial capital, I nevertheless act as vassal of the Emperor [臣土雖遠京師，然為天子氓].”¹³ The burial site of the king, who was given a state funeral in Nanjing, survives today as a splendid example for the shared political-symbolic superstructure. With its traditional *shendao* 神道 ‘spirit path,’ flanked by stone sculptures, it is modelled on the tomb of the Ming founder (located circa eight miles northeast of it at Zijinshan 紫金山, or Purple Mountain), only in miniature form. While Hongwu's long and winding spirit path has a great variety of sculptures, including imperial animals such as elephants and lions, the king of Boni's path is shorter and restricts itself to tigers, horses, goats, grooms, and generals (Figure 11). The overall architectural outline, however, is identical, suggesting that the king of Boni was, as a subject ruler, part of the Ming universal empire:

¹¹ James Louis Hevia (1995), *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham: Duke University Press), 25.

¹² Song Lian 宋濂 (ed.), *Boniguo rugong ji* 勃尼國入貢記 [*The Country of Boni Submits Tribute*] (1371), in *Mingjing shiwen bian* 明經世文編, ed. Chen Zilong 陳子龍, *juan* 2, 15-1. My translation based on Johannes L. Kurz (2014), “Two Early Ming Texts on Borneo,” *Ming Studies* 70, 62, with minor revisions.

¹³ Hu Guang 胡廣 (1919 [1408]), *Boniguo gongshun wang mubei* 淳泥國恭順王墓碑 [*Epitaph for the ‘Respectful and Obedient’ king of Boni*], in Cheng Minzheng 程敏政 (ed.), *Huang Ming wenheng* 皇明文衡 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan). My translation based on Kurz (2014), “Ming Texts on Borneo,” 66, with minor revisions.



Figure 11. Spirit path at the tomb of the king of Boni (erected 1408) in modern Nanjing¹⁴

While Shen Zhi, envoy to the king of Boni, is a relatively minor figure, a contemporaneous envoy, Zheng He, made it to historiographical and popular fame (at least in the twentieth century). He will serve as a prime example for the early Ming's universal imperial claim. As his expeditions (1405-1433) constitute the probably most romanticised and misunderstood period of Ming history, they are best approached by debunking two common misperceptions. Firstly, Zheng He is not well described as an “ambassador of peace” and did not simply embark into the Indian Ocean to pay “friendly visits to foreign ports.”¹⁵ Most of his crew were members of the regular Ming military and used military force at least three times on Sumatra and Sri Lanka. Chinese sources emphasise this by recording the promotions given to them for fighting.¹⁶ A bronze bell dated 1431 and excavated in Nanjing speaks of Zheng He and his “fellow military officials” [同官軍人].¹⁷ The *Ming History* further states

¹⁴ The tomb is located at the foot of Guishan 龜山 (Turtle Mountain), Yuhuatai District 雨花台區, between the southern gate of the Nanjing city wall and the grave of Zheng He at Niushoushan 牛首山 (Ox Head Mountain). It can be found in the middle of a somewhat forlorn little public park. Photo J. S. Lotze, 4 April 2016.

¹⁵ Fu Chunjiang (2005), *The Great Explorer Cheng Ho [Zheng He]: Ambassador of Peace* (Singapore: Asiapac); Joseph Needham (1978), *The Shorter Science and Civilisation in China: An Abridgement of Joseph Needham's Original Text*, ed. Colin A. Ronan (Cambridge), 142.

¹⁶ Wade (2005), “Reassessment”; Dreyer (2006), *Zheng He*; Brook (2010), *Troubled Empire*, 93-94.

¹⁷ Chinese text in Brook (2014), “Ming in the World,” 273-273, where also an image of the bell can be seen.

that those polities “who did not submit were intimidated through the use of military force” [不服則以武懾之].¹⁸ Since, at the same time, the fleet was not intent on conquest, what was the purpose of the expeditions? This leads to the second problematic perception of Zheng He as ‘explorer,’ circulating since Jan Duyvendak (1889-1954).¹⁹ Yet, the massive fleet of around 200 ships and 27,800 men, clearly built to impress, never travelled into the unknown. While one could argue that it did bring about new knowledge (a commemorative stele notes how Western Regions countries presented local products, “none of which had ever been heard of [in China]” [皆古所未聞者]²⁰), the fleet nevertheless moved on well-established *Haji* and trade routes, known to earlier Chinese sailors and both Muslim traders and pilgrims (Figure 12). In the words of the *Ming History*, the fleet “displayed soldiers in foreign lands” [耀兵異域] in order to “give a demonstration of the wealth and power of the Central Realm” [示中國富強].²¹ Zheng He’s ships were to awe foreign rulers to accept the Son of Heaven as their tributary overlord.

Bang and Kołodziejczyk, thus, rightly associate the expeditions with the ambitions of a universal empire, but all too easily consider them “unprecedented.”²² Zheng He used monsoon wind patterns that were known to Chinese navigators since the Song 宋 dynasty (960-1279) when the court had actively promoted foreign trade and a kind of maritime diplomacy.²³ In particular, his expeditions were shaped by Mongol precedent and are much less unique than commonly perceived. In Yuan China, government fleets had made expeditions to Java, Sri Lanka, and various Southeast Asian polities, making maritime exchange exceed previous levels.²⁴ Chinese Muslim families in ports such as Quanzhou became influential by serving a regime that saw the sea as an important means to keep contact with the Ilkhanate of Persia.²⁵ However, while Zheng He has recently become somewhat of a national hero

¹⁸ *Ming History*, juan 304, 7767.

¹⁹ Jan Julius Lodewijk Duyvendak (1949), *China’s Discovery of Africa* (London: A. Probsthain); see also (1933), *Ma Huan Re-examined* (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche uitgeversmaatschappij).

²⁰ *Liujiagang bei* 劉家港碑 [*Liu Family Harbour Stele*], erected by Zheng He’s crew in 1431. Quoted after Zhu Bokang 朱伯康 (1995), *Zhongguo jingji shi* 中國經濟史 [*Economic History of China*], vol. II (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe), 240.

²¹ *Ming History*, *Liezhuan* 列傳 [*Biographies*], *Huanguan* 宦官 [*Eunuch-Officials*], Zheng He 鄭和.

²² Bang & Kołodziejczyk, “Elephant of India,” 8.

²³ Zheng (2012), *China on the Sea*, 37-44.

²⁴ For an account of how the horse-based Mongols came to use maritime techniques to take power in the Chinese world, see Lo Jung-pang (author) & Bruce A. Elleman (editor) (2012), *China as a Sea Power, 1127-1368: A Preliminary Survey of the Maritime Expansion and Naval Exploits of the Chinese People During the Southern Song and Yuan Periods* (Singapore: NUS Press).

²⁵ Park (2012), *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds*, 98.

in China, the significance of the Yuan (and Song) naval expeditions remains hugely understudied.²⁶



Figure 12. Major routes of the Zheng He expeditions, 1405-1433²⁷

The Zheng He era produced many texts expressing the Ming claim to represent a universal empire. To study their rhetoric, consider the *Changle Stele*, erected by Zheng He's crew in 1431 and summing up the legacy of their maritime expeditions:

From the edge of the sky to the ends of the earth, there are none who have not become subjects and vassals. To the most western of the Western Regions and to the most northern of the northern extremities, the journey routes may be calculated. Thus, all the foreigners from beyond the seas have come to court, bearing precious objects and gifts, [even those who are] from a truly distant piece of earth [so that their languages require] double translation [際天極地，罔不臣妾。其西域之西，迤北之北，固遠矣。而程途可計。若海外諸番，實為遐壤，皆捧琛執贄，重譯來朝].²⁸

²⁶ Two important recent exceptions, the works of marine archaeologists, are James P. Delgado (2008), *Khubilai Khan's Lost Fleet: In Search of a Legendary Armada* (Berkeley: University of California Press); and Randall J. Sasaki (2015), *The Origins of the Lost Fleet of the Mongol Empire* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press).

²⁷ Image from John Hemming (ed.) (1997), *Oxford Atlas of Exploration* (New York: Oxford University Press).

²⁸ *Changle bei* 長樂碑 [*Changle Stele*] (1431), quoted after Zheng Yijun 鄭一鈞 (1985), *Lun Zheng He xia Xiyang 論鄭和下西洋* [*On Zheng He's Voyages into the Western Ocean*] (Beijing: Haiyang chubanshe), 14.

This passage first states the universal claim, expressed as supremacy over numerous subject rulers. It then points to the systematisation of geographical science Zheng He's expeditions brought about (calculation of journey routes), thus celebrating the fact that universal empires create supra-local knowledge.²⁹ Finally, the sea is perceived as the means to enforce the claim by making diverse rulers come to the Ming court; their presence at the centre, again, proves the validity of the claim. Foreigners, thus, play an important role in this worldview, both in rhetoric and in their physical presence at the capital. The need for 'double translation' (*chongyi* 重譯, referring to relay translation, such as Arabic-to-Persian-to-Chinese in the *Heavenly Patterns* case), a stereotype for remoteness from the centre that also appears in the poems the early Ming envoy Chen Cheng wrote on his travels, further symbolises the Ming's universal reach.³⁰

At the same time, 'double translation,' is more than a stereotype. Naturally, the diversity of languages and scripts was felt strongly when the empire began to look seawards, and it was hardly a coincidence that the *Bureau of Translators* was founded in 1407 of all years, the very year Zheng He's ships returned from their maiden voyage. Rather than seeing the *Bureau's* foundation as 'the usual' institute for translation that would have existed anyway, I suggest to understand it as part of a series of early Ming policies expressing universal imperial ambition. These policies included on the military-diplomatic side the maritime expeditions of Zheng He, plus land-based armed embassies, such as the one led by Yishiha. Significantly, both Zheng He and Yishiha installed trilingual steles abroad, translating the Ming's claim to wider audiences. On the scholarly and administrative side, these policies comprised, apart from the *Bureau*, massive projects of intellectual collaboration, such as the *Yongle Dadian* 永樂大典 [*Great Canon of the Yongle Era*] (1408), a compilation of all works of 'Chinese' literature considered significant, including the *Secret History of the Mongols* in translation.³¹ The universal claim becomes evident even in paratexts surrounding translations. The preface of the *Heavenly Patterns*—the archetypal early Ming translation project, as I argued in the introduction—reminds readers that the empire "rules over *Hua* (the 'civilised world,' the 'Chinese' ecumene) and *Yi* ('barbarians') alike" [撫臨華夷].³² In parallel, the *Sino-Barbarian*

²⁹ On the supra-local knowledge dimension, see also Bang & Kołodziejczyk, "Elephant of India," 31.

³⁰ For Chen's poems using the term *chongyi*, see Didier (2012), *Ambassadeur des premiers empereurs*, 400 and 464.

³¹ For the *Secret History* in the *Great Canon*, see Hung (1951), "Transmission," 433-437.

³² Wu (1996 [1383]), *Preface to the Heavenly Patterns*, 2.

Translations confirm that the Ming “received the explicit mandate of heaven [to be] sovereign over *Hua* and *Yi* alike” [受天明命，君主華夷] so that “the four oceans became one family” [四海一家].³³ Again, however, we must recall that this is *rhetoric* and not necessarily a faithful mirror of *practice*. What happened when ‘barbarians’ journeyed to the capital and what role did translation actually play?

2. Tribute, trade, and translation

One defining trait of universal empires, as argued above, is the claim of supremacy over subject rulers through a shared political superstructure and symbolic forms of diplomacy.³⁴ These forms are what many historians of China since Fairbank refer to as the ‘tribute system.’ The notion of tribute (*gong* 貢, *feng* 奉) has already appeared several times in this thesis. As Chapter One has shown, the Ming founder believed that the Yuan constituted a legitimate exception from the rule that barbarians were always tribute-bringers to the Central Realm. Chapter Two elaborated how Tibetan was taken into account in language status planning due to regular visits of Tibetan tributary embassies. I further argued that a major purpose of Zheng He’s expeditions was to awe foreign rulers to accept the Ming emperor as their universal tributary overlord. Institutions for translation also exhibit clear links to the tribute system. The *Regulations* specify that the *Bureau of Translators* was founded, in 1407, “because the languages and scripts of the barbarians from the four cardinal directions, who came to pay tribute at court, could not be understood” [因四夷朝貢言語文字不通].³⁵ Moreover, certain items in *yiyu*-glossaries point to their use within the context of tributary relations:

Bring tribute every year [年年進貢].
Bring horses [進馬].
You must not speak now [不許說話].
Behave in accordance with the ceremony [好生行禮].
When it is time to bow down, do bow down [鞠躬時鞠躬].
Do not take too much wine and meat [不許多要酒肉].
Do not sit on the road leading to the imperial palace [御路上不要坐].³⁶

³³ Liu (1971 [1389]), *Preface to the Chinese-Barbarian Translations*, 2.

³⁴ Bang & Kołodziejczyk (2012), “Elephant of India,” esp. 11, 27-33.

³⁵ *Regulations for the Bureau of Translators*, chapter 1, “Establishment” [建設].

³⁶ Examples from Kane (1989), *Sino-Jurchen Vocabulary*, 179, 303-313.

These are evidently useful sentences Ming-employed translators might utter towards foreign envoys in the contexts of economic transactions, banquets given for embassies, imperial rituals, and general enforcement of appropriate conduct.

Thus, a closer look at the ‘tribute system,’ a much-debated problem in the history of China, is necessary to contextualise early Ming institutions for translation. However, even though the above vocabulary mentions “tribute” (*gong*), the tribute *system* is a theory before it is a fact. Originally elaborated by Fairbank from the 1940s through the 1960s, it still serves as a reference point for most discussions of traditional China’s foreign relations.³⁷ Fairbank’s model conceived of an East Asian system of tributary relations centering on China, the ‘Chinese world order.’ Foreign polities had to recognise the superiority of the Son of Heaven, whereupon both diplomacy and trade were channeled into the tribute system. While Fairbank rightly saw tribute and trade as part of one single system, his theory has less explanatory power when *motives* come into play. Fairbank’s classic formulation that Chinese rulers were interested in “the moral value of tribute” (its material value supposedly being of little benefit to them) and foreign rulers in “the material value of trade” still characterises a great deal of thinking about the tribute system.³⁸ Li Yunquan 李雲泉 argues that the Chinese side valued not so much the substance of tribute but its function to illustrate their superiority.³⁹ Even Zhang Feng, who criticises the tribute system model as one-sided, does never mention economic interest as a motive of Chinese courts.⁴⁰ In general, it has often been stated that “economically, the tributary practice was a loss to China.”⁴¹

Fairbank and his followers are right in seeing the tribute system as an “ingenious vehicle” for trade, but err in seeing the *motive* for trade only on the foreign side, not in China.⁴² This will be shown below, for the early Ming case, by

³⁷ John King Fairbank (1942), “Tributary Trade and China’s Relations with the West,” in *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, 129-149; and (1968), *Chinese World Order*.

³⁸ Fairbank (1942), “Tributary Trade,” 139. Fairbank’s formula is repeated, rather uncritically, in Leo J. Blanken (2012), *Rational Empires: Institutional Incentives and Imperial Expansion* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 90.

³⁹ Li Yunquan 李雲泉 (2004), *Chaogong zhidu shilun: Zhongguo gudai duiwai guanxi tizhi yanjiu* 朝貢制度史論：中國古代對外關係體制研究 [*Historical Essays on the Tribute System: China’s Premodern Institution of Foreign Relations*] (Beijing: Xinhua shudian).

⁴⁰ Zhang Feng (2010), “Rethinking the ‘Tribute System’: Broadening the Conceptual Horizon of Historical East Asian Politics,” in Zheng Yongnian (ed.), *China and International Relations: The Chinese View and the Contribution of Wang Gungwu* (London: Routledge), 75-101.

⁴¹ Immanuel C. Y. Hsü (1971). *Readings in Modern Chinese History* (New York: Oxford University Press), 80.

⁴² John King Fairbank (1953), *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 32.

studying the local workings of tribute and trade on the basis of the *Bureau of Interpreters*, thereby emphasising practical aspects and contexts of language study. Officially, multilingual ability was necessary in order to “change the barbarians” [變夷] and civilise them, as Chapter Four will elaborate. But regardless of how serious early Ming rulers took such rhetoric themselves, it is clear that many reasons for language learning were more pragmatic: one of them was the desire to engage in trade, and the *Bureau of Interpreters* was the ideal place to combine both trade and translation. China had long been part of a global trade network that ranged from Syria to Japan and in need of foreign products, in the Ming just as under former dynasties.⁴³ While the early Ming worldview deemphasised foreign relations and trade, rulers were aware of other powerful polities and received as well as dispatched envoys. Policies were not necessarily shaped by sinocentric tribute ideologies but just as well by the practicalities of the situation. As Joseph Fletcher noted long ago, the Yongle emperor addressed the ruler of the Timurid empire as a fellow monarch in a 1418 letter.⁴⁴ Under Yongle alone, the Ming received 20 embassies from Samarkand and Herat, 32 embassies from Central Eurasia, and 44 embassies from Hami.⁴⁵ As we shall see, material benefits did not flow only in one direction.

In contrast to the myth of economic self-sufficiency—a myth cultivated by the Chinese state itself—the Ming imported a considerable variety of goods. Typical and famous early Ming tributary items included rare or fierce animals, such as giraffes, lions, tigers, ostriches, zebras, and leopards: creatures of prestige, displaying the power of universal emperors “to absorb the foreign and the exotic.”⁴⁶ Elephants, symbols of authority throughout Eurasia, were imported in huge numbers.⁴⁷ More useful animals, however, were also brought in as tribute, proving that its function was not just prestige. In particular, the Ming cavalry was in desperate need of horses and Zheng He’s ships collected them from all over the Indian Ocean world. More horses came over land, mainly from the Mongols in the north, but also from Java, Champa,

⁴³ On “Early Chinese Cosmopolitanism,” see the eponymous chapter in Waley-Cohen (1999), *Sextants*, 11-54.

⁴⁴ Joseph F. Fletcher (1968), “China and Central Asia, 1368-1884,” in Fairbank, *Chinese World Order*, 206-224.

⁴⁵ See the “Appendix” in Rossabi (1976), “Two Ming Envoys,” 29-34.

⁴⁶ Bang & Kołodziejczyk (2012), “Elephant of India,” 28.

⁴⁷ Thomas R. Trautmann (2015), *Elephants and Kings: An Environmental History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 303-304; Mark Elvin (2004), *The Retreat of the Elephants: An Environmental History of China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 16-17; Roderich Ptak (1991), “Pferde auf See: Ein vergessener Aspekt des maritimen chinesischen Handels im frühen 15. Jahrhundert,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 34, 209.

and the Ayutthaya Kingdom.⁴⁸ 3,546 horses were imported from the Timurids on 14 December 1422 alone.⁴⁹ In fact, the Ming's demand was so great that Serruys knows "of no case where Mongol horses were rejected even when they were allegedly in very poor condition."⁵⁰ Further tribute not imported for prestige but due to real needs includes wax, horsethair, honey, ginseng, mushrooms, and even wood.⁵¹ The early Ming imported military-use goods, such as sulphur for gunpowder, naphtha (flammable oil), horns, steel, sinews, hides, and timber for the building of houses and ships.⁵² Precious stones were imported from Burma (with Burmese studied at the *Bureau of Translators*) and Sri Lanka (where the Galle Trilingual Stele was installed). Early Ming China imported spices, especially pepper, and from the Timurids camels, jade, sal ammoniac, sheep, gerfalcons, sable, and squirrel pelts.⁵³ Yongle ate imported food, such as Korean rice cakes, Jurchen duck, and 'Muslim pancakes.'⁵⁴ Given this fascinating variety of imports, it is absurd that Dreyer asserts in his discussion of Zheng He that early Ming China "imported spices but not much else."⁵⁵ Unfortunately, his focus on the overlooked military aspects—as important as it is—has led him to ignore or downplay economic dimensions.

Trade was one of the central functions of the *Bureau of Interpreters* and it is only due to the strong incentive for cross-language mediation created by trade that the *Huitong guan* 會同館 ever came to be rendered as *Bureau of Interpreters* in anglophone scholarship and not just as *Bureau of Traders*. *Huitong* 會同, literally 'getting together,' originally indicates an audience of a 'tributary' ruler with the emperor. A *guan* originally referred to any kind of accommodation, a kind of hostel, and later more generally to 'public building' or administrative bureau.⁵⁶ *Huitong*

⁴⁸ On horse imports, see Ptak (1991), "Pferde auf See"; Serruys (1975), *Sino-Mongol Relations* III; Morris Rossabi (1970), "The Tea and Horse Trade with Inner Asia during the Ming," *Journal of Asian History* 4 (1970), 136-168.

⁴⁹ See the "Appendix" in Rossabi (1976), "Two Ming Envoys," 29-34, for this and further examples.

⁵⁰ Serruys (1975), *Sino-Mongol Relations* III, 40.

⁵¹ Serruys (1975), *Sino-Mongol Relations* III, passim.

⁵² Lo (2012), *China as a Sea Power*, 85. The sulphur deposits on Sumatra are described by Zheng He's translator Ma Huan in Ma (author) & J. V. G. Mills (translator) (1970 [1433]), *Ying-yai sheng-lan: The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 117.

⁵³ In 1382, for example, Java sent an amount of 75,000 *jīn* (circa 45,000 kg) pepper, officially registered as 'tribute.' See Ptak (1991), "Pferde auf See," 209. For the early Ming trade with the Timurids, see Rossabi (1976), "Two Ming Envoys," 29-34; Watanabe Hiroshi (1975), "An Index of Embassies and Tribute Missions from Islamic Countries to Ming China (1368-1466) as Recorded in the 'Ming Shi-lu', Classified According to Geographic Area," *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 33, 285-347.

⁵⁴ Mote (1977), "Yüan and Ming," 202.

⁵⁵ Dreyer (2006), *Zheng He*, 9.

⁵⁶ Pelliot (1948), "Sseu-yi-kouan," 207-208.

guan, therefore, is something like a *Supervising Hostel for Tributary Rulers Visiting the Capital*. Similarly, the *Siyi guan*, rendered customarily as *Bureau of Translators*, is literally the *Bureau for the Barbarians of the Four Cardinal Directions*. As can be seen, no word for ‘language’ or ‘translation’ appears in either of the institutes’ Chinese names. This is significant, as it shows that the actual translation work done at both bureaus was not necessarily considered to be their main function, a question that will be further discussed in Chapter Five. The Ming’s first *Bureau of Interpreters* was located in Nanjing, whose cosmopolitanism is captured by the fact that the earliest extant painting depicting it as capital shows a group of foreign envoys just leaving by boat.⁵⁷

How then did tributary, trade, and translation work on ground level? In theory, envoys, after presenting “tribute” [貢] and receiving their “return presents” [賞], would be “allowed to trade at the *Bureau of Interpreters*” [許於會同館開市] for up to five days.⁵⁸ When the trade was about to begin, “an announcement would be posted at the *Bureau* gate” [出給告示，於館門首張掛]. The official statutes would like to control Chinese-foreign trade and interactions as far as possible. First of all, certain forbidden items could under no circumstances be given to foreigners, such as weapons and metal tools. “History books” [史書] were also taboo, maybe because the court perceived some of their contents as military secrets, maybe also due to their status as state symbols of legitimacy that should not be ‘dirtied’ by foreigners, similar to the prohibition of Qurans being sold to Christian merchants in the Mamluk empire. In particular, those trading in a *si* 私 way—with both basic meanings of *si*, ‘privately’ and ‘illegally,’ applying here—should be punished:

if barbarians intentionally and secretly enter the houses of commoners to trade, the private/illegal goods will be confiscated. (...) Military men, commoners, or neighbours who—inside or outside the *Bureau of Interpreters*—buy forbidden goods on behalf of the barbarians, will be sentenced to wear the cangue for one month and sent off to frontier guard duty [若各夷故違，潛入人家交易者，私貨入官。 (...) 會同館內外四鄰軍民人等，代替夷人收買違禁貨物者問罪，枷號一箇月，發邊衛充軍].⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Anonymous, *Song jo cheon gaek gwi guk si jang do* 送朝天客歸國詩章圖 [Seeing off Korean envoys returning to their country]. Hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, ca. 1451-1600; possibly executed at the Joseon court painting bureau at Hanseong; *National Museum of Korea*, Seoul. See the image in Clunas & Harrison-Hall (2014), *Ming*, 47.

⁵⁸ *Collected Statutes*, *juan* 108, 1625; these regulations seem to be general rules.

⁵⁹ *Collected Statutes*, *juan* 108, 1625.

This shows that not only merchants proper came into contact with foreigners but also military men and commoners, otherwise such restrictions would not exist. Several complaints in the sources clarify that the problem persisted. In 1490, the Duke of Ying, Zhang Mao 張懋, noted that:

many envoys, frequently and under clever pretexts, communicate with the personnel of the *Bureau of Interpreters* and with merchants who, without waiting for the *Ministry of Rites* to fix a period of trade, sell them privately/illegally forbidden goods. Recently, barbarians from Hami and other countries brought jade and other wares and sold them to immoral subjects on credit. [The latter] continuously delayed payment so that the barbarians prolonged their stay to over one year. Sometimes, [the foreigners] leave the [*Bureau*] premises, drink wine and behave incorrectly; interpreters (*tongshi*) repeatedly urge them to leave [Ming territory] [使臣多習巧詐往往交通館夫及市人，不待禮部開市之期，預將違禁貨物私賣。近哈密等國夷人帶來玉石等貨，又為姦人賒賣，久不還價，夷人延住經年。或出外飲酒為非，通事累促起程]⁶⁰,

but without success. There are similar complaints about envoys who pretend to submit tribute but then stay at the *Bureau* intolerably long for trading, sometimes for years. This whole procedure is similar to the Venetian-Mamluk *muda* system, in which a limited interval of legal trade would be fixed, called the *muda* (from Ar. *mudda* مدة, 'period'). Further similarities include the credit system and the prolonged stays of some traders.⁶¹ The institution of the *fondaco* (from Ar. *funduq* فندق 'inn') in the Mediterranean world, where merchants and their goods were compelled to lodge, is comparable to the *Bureau* in its hostel and market place functions; translators were also to be found there.⁶² This suggests that traditional China's foreign relations and related institutions are not necessarily as unique as sometimes perceived.

Moreover, it is important to further distinguish law and reality. The rules, as we have seen, forbade private trade and prescribed that embassies remain confined to the *Bureau of Interpreters*. Enforcement of such rules, however, proved difficult due to the very large number of people and goods going through the *Bureau*. The fact that, in 1441, Tibetan envoys feasted away the *Bureau's* complete food supply so that envoys from other countries were facing empty plates, points to the normality of a

⁶⁰ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Chenghua, *juan* 35, 760.

⁶¹ On the *muda* system, see Georg Christ (2012), *Trading Conflicts: Venetian Merchants and Mamluk Officials in Late Medieval Alexandria* (Leiden: Brill), 88-91, 95-96, 100, 187-191, 242-243.

⁶² On the *fondaco*, see Olivia Remie Constable (2004), *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World: Lodging, Trade, and Travel in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Henry Simonsfeld (1887), *Der Fondaco dei Tedeschi in Venedig und die Deutsch-Venetianischen Handelsbeziehungen* (Stuttgart: Cotta).

constant coming and going of various foreigners.⁶³ In 1448, the *Bureau* director noted that Jurchen embassies disregarded gate restrictions and roamed happily through the streets and markets.⁶⁴ If this could happen, it is difficult to imagine that envoys in general limited their trading activities to the short time allowed or even to the *Bureau* premises. The sources also indicate that strict enforcement of some rules was not intended. A *Veritable Records* entry from 1446 notes:

the Oirat Mongol envoy Pīr Muḥammad, and others, offered as tribute: 800 horses, 13,000 squirrel pelts, 16,000 ermine pelts, and 200 sable pelts. The court, seeing that this was too much, took the best horses, 10,000 of both squirrel and ermine pelts, all 200 sable pelts, and told the envoys to sell the rest on their own accord [瓦剌使臣皮兒馬黑麻等貢，馬八百匹，青鼠皮十三萬，銀鼠皮一萬六千，貂鼠皮二百。上以其過多，命馬收其良者，青銀鼠皮各收一萬，惟貂鼠皮全收之，餘悉令其使臣自鬻].⁶⁵

Evidently, this Mongol embassy could privately *and* legally sell a huge amount of the goods they had brought into Ming China—9000 pelts plus hundreds of horses—and the streets around the *Bureau of Interpreters* must have been brimming with trade. Similarly, in December 1452:

the Oirat Mongol envoy, Muslim Hajji Ni'ama (Ni'ma نعمة, Ar. 'blessing'?), offered [as tribute] more than 5,900 *jin* of jade. He was told by imperial order that he did not have to submit any tribute and could sell [everything] on his own accord [瓦剌使臣火只你阿麻回回，進玉石五千九百餘斤，詔免進令其自賣].⁶⁶

Here, the tribute part of the game is skipped and private trade can commence without further ado. The embassy surely made no bad deal: warnings against cheating or overcharging the barbarians appear almost as often in the sources as the reminder not to sell them forbidden items. In 1439, a Ming subject was beheaded at the *Bureau of Interpreters* for stealing silver from a Mongol envoy.⁶⁷

It is thus difficult to agree with Serruys' opinion that, for the Ming court, "trade was a rather annoying byproduct of the tribute relations."⁶⁸ His assessment is

⁶³ Serruys (1967), *Sino-Mongol Relations* II, 419.

⁶⁴ Serruys (1967), *Sino-Mongol Relations* II, 421.

⁶⁵ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Zhengtong, *juan* 136, 2704.

⁶⁶ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Zhengtong, *juan* 235, 5122.

⁶⁷ Serruys (1967), *Sino-Mongol Relations* II, 434.

⁶⁸ Serruys (1967), *Sino-Mongol Relations* II, 435.

true, however, in slightly rephrased form: in the *rhetoric* of the Ming court, trade was supposed to *appear* as an insignificant byproduct. Similarly, while in Fairbank's model Chinese rulers mainly desired 'prestige value' and foreign rulers 'material value,' we have seen that profits flowed in both directions. Moreover, tributary and private trade were interwoven, with the tribute often functioning like a fee paid for later private transactions. Even if it would be true that tributary trade was not profitable for the Ming from the strict bookkeeper's point of view, it was profitable in the sense that it enabled them to import urgently needed goods they could not produce by themselves, such as horses. One place for trade was the *Bureau of Interpreters*, where translation was part of daily routine, mediating the economic interests of all parties. We shall now look at other purposes of translation, in which practical and symbolic aspects will increasingly overlap.

3. Practical and symbolic aspects of multilingualism

One aspect of universal empires and a major necessity for them is rather overlooked in Bang and Kołodziejczyk's comprehensive survey: multilingualism.⁶⁹ First of all, it was desirable for practical reasons, such as trade, as we have seen. Consequently, Yongle made clear in 1421 that the Ming should understand the meaning of "*all foreign scripts*" [諸番字], that is, explicitly the scripts in addition to the spoken languages (important for public-symbolic functions, such as multilingual inscriptions). "Intelligent persons" [聰明者] amongst Imperial University (*Taixue* 太學) students were chosen to study them.⁷⁰ As argued earlier, we should not take such developments for granted but see them as a form of language policy. Before the Mongol era, neighbour states were frequently expected to write Chinese-language letters for communication.⁷¹ Hence, if it would indeed be correct to speak of a "Sino-centric Ming Empire," it could simply expect of other polities to use literary Chinese in all correspondence, just as the Vietnamese, Koreans, and Japanese did.⁷² However, this was no road for early Ming rulers to go. Instead, they emulated with the *Bureau of Translators* an institution of universal empire first introduced by the Mongols: as

⁶⁹ Bang & Kołodziejczyk (2012), *Universal Empire*.

⁷⁰ *Regulations for the Bureau of Translators*, chapter 1, "Establishment" [建設].

⁷¹ See, for example, Lung (2011), *Interpreters*, 27; Crossley (1991), "Structure and Symbol," 57.

⁷² Lin Hsiao-ting (2011), *Modern China's Ethnic Frontiers: A Journey to the West* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge), xxiv. As Chapter Two has shown, Vietnamese, etc., were thus not considered 'barbarians' (*Yi*) proper and their languages, perceived as *tongwen* 'identical script' languages, were not studied in the *Siyi guan*, or *Bureau of Translators*.

the Persian historian Juvainī reported in the 1250s, Mongol rulers employed “scribes for Persian, Uyghur, Chinese, Tibetan, Tangut, etc., so that to whatever locale a decree is to be written, it is issued in the language and script of that people.”⁷³

Other purposes of translation were not related to present needs of diplomacy but to the Mongol past. For example, why did the Ming imperially commission translations such as the *Heavenly Patterns* in the 1380s?⁷⁴ We might also ask, why were those books—formerly kept in the Yuan imperial library of Khanbaliq—not already translated earlier? Indeed, scholars puzzled over exactly that question. Needham, for instance, speculated that “there may have been a translation of Euclid into Chinese at that time [the late thirteenth century], due to the Chinese-Arabic contact.”⁷⁵ However, this is not supported by evidence. In particular, it seems unlikely that such translations would have been considered necessary by the Mongol ruling class. After all, their specialists on ‘Western’ astronomy, taken from the diverse group of *Semu* people, were able to understand the Persian or Arabic texts—and if Chinese scholars, who had been forced into a sub-*Semu* social stratum could not understand these books due to insufficient foreign language skills, all the better. The Ming, having just scaled down a formerly Mongol-led Eurasian empire back to ‘China proper,’ naturally had a different viewpoint: they wanted to avoid certain technical texts being only intelligible to specialists of non-Chinese ancestry who could have monopolised on this knowledge. As Chinese was *de facto* reintroduced as the major imperial language, it was an early Ming interest to save Yuan achievements through translation and make these books accessible to Chinese scholars who had now returned to a prominent position—just as they intended to preserve knowledge about the language of their predecessors through works such as the *Sino-Barbarian Translations*. The argument can equally be applied to the disputed date of the *Huihui yaofang* 回回藥方 [*Muslim Prescriptions*], a translation of medical texts from Persian into Chinese, done either in the late Yuan or early Ming.⁷⁶ With the above in mind, an early Ming origin seems more likely: the Ming, again, would have had more

⁷³ Juvainī (author) & Boyle (translator) (1997 [1259]), *Tarikh-i Jahangushay-i*, vol. II, 607.

⁷⁴ That these translations were not done as a private scholarly endeavour but as an imperial venture can be inferred from Wu (1996 [1383]), *Preface to the Heavenly Patterns*, 2. Wu Bozong relates that on 24 October 1382, the Ming founder summoned Li Chong 李冲 and himself to the Gate of Heavenly Worship [奉天門], one of the gates of the original Ming palace of Nanjing. Subsequently, an “institution [for translation] was established” [開局] at the right side of the Right Gate of Obedience [右順門], which was located *within* the palace.

⁷⁵ Needham (1959), *Sciences of the Heavens and the Earth*, 105.

⁷⁶ Angela Schottenhammer (2010), “Transfer of Xiangyao 香藥 from Iran and Arabia to China,” in Kauz, *Maritime Silk Road*, 138, calls it a “Yuan period” work; Allsen (2001), *Culture and Conquest*, 159, treats it as an “early Ming translation.”

motivation to engage in such a translation effort. In the Yuan, the actual users of the book (such as Persian-speaking physicians at the Mongol court) would have understood the original. The text itself corroborates an early Ming provenance, as it refers to the city known as Khanbaliq or Dadu 大都 under the Yuan (that is, Beijing) as Beiping 北平 ‘The North is Pacified,’ a name given in the very early Ming to celebrate the victory over Mongol troops.⁷⁷

This understanding, that the achievements of the Yuan had to be preserved and adapted for a Chinese-reading audience, is expressed in the *Heavenly Patterns* preface: Persian-language books “coming from the remote barbarian regions” [遠出夷裔] are described as a treasure, once hidden in the “darkness” [晦], but now through translation brought to light and “put into the use of the Central Realm” [爲中國之用]. Needless to say, for Yuan intellectuals with Persian proficiency these books were not hidden in any darkness—but the preface, as any paratext, has to ‘sell’ the necessity of the main text. It continues, thus, with the declaration that the Ming “greatly surpasses former dynasties” [超軼前代遠矣] owing to their appreciation of foreign knowledge. Consequently, the achievements of Arab and Persian astronomers in Chinese translation are expected to be:

printed and displayed, [so that they may be] handed down and used together with the books of the sages and virtuous men of the Central Realm. This will be not only an enrichment for our times, but also a contribution for all ages [刻而列之，與中國聖賢之書并傳并用。豈惟有補於當今，抑亦有功於萬世云]!⁷⁸

Even here, where the practical benefits of translation work (astronomy, medicine) are obvious, symbolic aspects play a role as well: through translation the Ming enriches the imperial treasury of knowledge and is superior to their predecessors.

In other cases, symbolic dimensions are even more pronounced and, I would argue, at least as significant as practical ones. Both dimensions were crucial to the early Ming’s universal imperial claim, contrary to the notion that the Ming had little symbolic use for non-Chinese scripts.⁷⁹ The Mongol precedent must be considered first. The Yuan had produced many multiscrptual artefacts, such as coins or *paizi* 牌

⁷⁷ The complete Chinese text of the *Huihui yaofang* is contained in Song Xian 宋峴 (2000), *Huihui yaofang kaoshi* 回回藥方考釋 [Research on the ‘Muslim Prescriptions’] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju).

⁷⁸ Wu (1996 [1383]), *Preface to the Heavenly Patterns*, 2.

⁷⁹ Crossley (1991), “Structure and Symbol,” 59.

子 (passports).⁸⁰ Multilingualism also played a role in public monuments, witnessed by inscriptions in Chinese and Mongolian, often with the addition of Chinese written in Phagspa.⁸¹ In 1342-1345, the Mongols sponsored the creation of a hexaglot inscription at Juyong 居庸 Pass north of Beijing (henceforth Juyong Hexaglot): Buddhist sutras in Tibetan, Old Uyghur, Chinese, Tangut, Sanskrit written in Lantsa script, and Mongolian written in Phagspa, were inscribed inside an enormous vaulted portal.⁸² Three years later, in 1348, a stele was created commemorating benefactors to a Buddhist temple southeast of Dunhuang, one of them Sulaimān (速來蠻, or سليمان, respectively), a fourth generation descendant of Temüge, brother of Genghis Khan.⁸³ Below the Chinese title *Mogao ku* 莫高窟 “Cave of Unequalled Height,” the mantra *Om mani padme hum* is inscribed in six scripts, corresponding to those at Juyong Pass. As Figure 13 shows, the stele boasts Lantsa-script Sanskrit (horizontal row on top); Tibetan (second horizontal row): ཨོཾ་མ་ཎི་པདྨེ་ཧུཎ་; Chinese (first vertical row from the right): 唵嘛呢叭咪吽 ‘*an mani bami hong*’; Tangut (second vertical row); Phagspa (third vertical row); Old Uyghur (fourth vertical row, far left). At the bottom, the names of further temple benefactors are recorded in Chinese script, many of them—evidence of Yuan cosmopolitanism—Mongolian and Tibetan.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ One ancient passport, recovered in Yangzhou, has Chinese, Persian, and Mongolian written in Phagspa. See Igor de Rachewiltz (1982), “Two Recently Published *P’ai-tzu* Discovered in China,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 36, 413-417. For another trilingual *paizi*, see Nikolas Poppe (author) & John Richard Krueger (editor) (1957), *The Mongolian Monuments in hP’ags-pa Script* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz), 43 & 102.

⁸¹ Yuan multilingual inscriptions have been studied and partly translated by Francis Woodman Cleaves (1911-1995) in a series of articles in the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*. See Cleaves (1949), “The Sino-Mongolian Inscription of 1362 in Memory of Prince Hindu,” vol. 12, 1-133; (1950), “The Sino-Mongolian Inscription of 1335 in Memory of Chang Ying-Jui,” vol. 13, 1-131; (1951), “The Sino-Mongolian Inscription of 1338 in Memory of Jigünte,” vol. 14, 1-104; (1952), “The Sino-Mongolian Inscription of 1346,” vol. 15, 1-123; (1960-1961), “The Sino-Mongolian Inscription of 1240,” vol. 23, 62-75; and (1967), “The Sino-Mongolian Inscription of 1348,” vol. 27, 76-102.

⁸² Édouard Chavannes (1894), “Note préliminaire sur l’inscription de Kiu-yong-koan,” *Journal Asiatique* 4, 354-373; Murata Jiro (1957), *Chü-yung-kuan: The Buddhist Arch of the Fourteenth Century A.D. at the Pass of the Great Wall Northwest of Peking* (Kyoto: Faculty of Engineering Kyoto University).

⁸³ Édouard Chavannes (1902), *Dix inscriptions chinoises de l’Asie centrale d’après les estampages de M. Ch.-E. Bonin* (Paris, Imprimerie nationale); Cleaves (1967), “Sino-Mongolian Inscription of 1348.”

⁸⁴ See the appendix of Cleaves (1967), “Sino-Mongolian Inscription of 1348,” for facsimiles of these inscriptions.

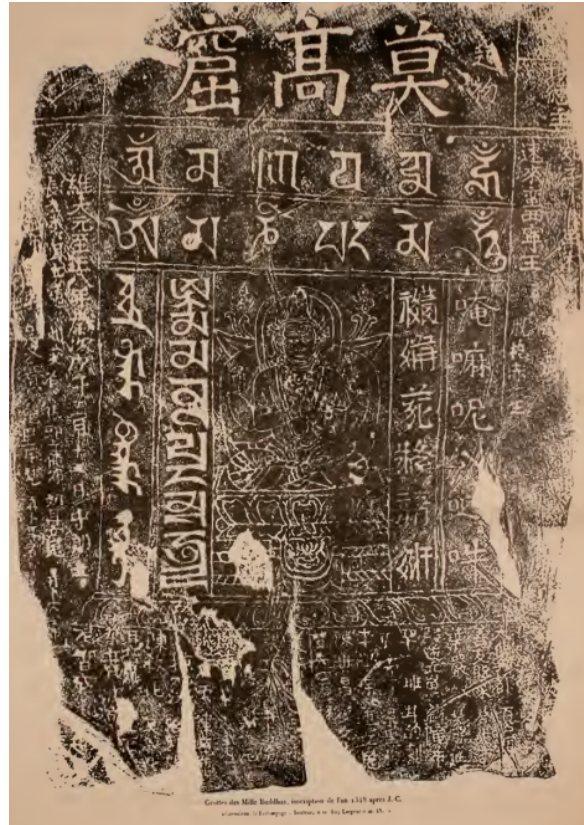


Figure 13. Face of the hexaglot Stele of Sulaiman (1348)⁸⁵

The Ming decided to imitate the Yuan by creating, though less extensively, artefacts boasting two or more languages. In the 1440s, they even restored the Juyong Hexaglot of the Mongols.⁸⁶ As Table 3 shows, multilingual texts addressed audiences *inside and outside* the empire. The Pentaglot Halima Account (1407), for example, expects a multilingual audience at home, while the Ming's bilingual edict of 1453 addresses a ruler abroad. The specific genre of steles 'for abroad' will now illustrate communicative and emblematic aspects of multilingualism. Some of them are only known through testimony. The historian Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥaydar Dughlāt (ca. 1499-1551) described a trilingual stele he saw, in 1533, in Tibet as a message of:

“the *Pādishāh* [High King] of *Khitāi* ختای [North China]. It was written in the *Khitāi* character, but in one corner it was in Tibetan writing, while in another corner it was a clear Persian translation in the Naskhi hand. (...) judging from the extent to which the inscription was worn, not more than a hundred years could have elapsed since it was written.”⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Size 140.5 x 61.5 cm. The stele is now held by the Dunhuang Research Academy 敦煌研究院. Image from Chavannes (1902), “Dix Inscriptions,” 96-97.

⁸⁶ Murata (1957), *Chü-yung-kuan*, 30, describes a stele commemorating an early Ming restoration, dated 1448, that was found on top of the Juyong Hexaglot portal.

⁸⁷ Original in Persian. Mirza Muḥammad Ḥaydar Dughlat (author) & E. Denison Ross (translator) (2008), *A History of the Moghuls of Central Asia: The Tarikh-i-Rashidi* (New York: Cosimo), 416. Naskh نسخ or Naskhi is a popular calligraphic style for writing in Arabic and Persian.

If this message of the *Pādishāh* of *Khitāi*, or emperor of China, was indeed circa one hundred years old at Dughlāt's time, it would be another early Ming creation. His description is too vague, however, to be sure. Other multilingual steles of the early Ming still exist. At least two trilingual exemplars were erected outside the empire: the Galle Stele (Chinese-Persian-Tamil) on Sri Lanka in 1409 or 1410 and the Yongning Stele (Chinese-Mongolian-Jurchen) in the Amur river region in 1413.⁸⁸

Table 3 Multilingual creations of the early Ming

Date	Source/Artefact	Languages involved	Type of work
early Ming	Stele in Tibet described by Dughlāt	Chinese, Persian Tibetan	Trilingual inscription issued in the name of the Ming emperor and erected outside the empire proper
ca. 1368-1422	Letters of patent	Chinese, Tibetan	Bilingual letters of patent for Tibetan clerics
1407	Pentaglot Halima Account	Chinese, Persian, Tibetan, Mongolian, <i>Baiyi</i> (?)	Illustrated pentaglot account to remember the visit of a foreign guest
1407	'Edict on Islam'	Chinese, Persian, Mongolian	Trilingual edict protecting Muslim clerics in the Ming empire
dated 1409	Galle Trilingual Stele (Sri Lanka)	Chinese, Persian, Tamil	Trilingual inscription issued in the name of the Ming emperor and erected outside the empire proper
ca. 1410	Yongle <i>Kangyur</i>	Chinese, Tibetan	Bilingual collection of sacred texts
dated 1413	Yongning Trilingual Stele	Chinese, Mongolian, Jurchen	Trilingual inscription issued in the name of the Chinese emperor and erected outside the empire proper
ca. 1417-1423	Yongle Big Bell	Chinese, Sanskrit in Lantsa script	Bilingual inscription on a bell
early 15th century	Avalokiteshvara temple hanging	Tibetan, Sanskrit in Lantsa script	Textile with bilingual inscription
1431	Tetraglot <i>dharani</i> collection	Chinese, Mongolian, Tibetan, Sanskrit in Lantsa script	Collection of <i>dharani</i> (Buddhist spells or mantras)
1453	Edict to the prince of Lar	Chinese, Mongolian	Bilingual edict

⁸⁸ The Galle Trilingual Stele is dated 15 February 1409. Either this is the day the stele was erected, in which case it was put up on the return voyage of Zheng He's second expedition, or it was prepared in advance and erected on Sri Lanka in 1410 at the earliest. For the Chinese part, see Eva Nagel (2001), "The Chinese Inscription on the Trilingual Slabstone from Galle Reconsidered," in *Ancient Ruhuna*, vol. I, ed. H.-J. Weisshaar et al. (Wiesbaden: Reichert), 385-468; for the Tamil part, see Senerath Paranavithana (1933), "The Tamil Inscription on the Galle Trilingual Slab," *Epigraphia Zeylanica* 3, 331-341, esp. 336-337. The stele is held by the National Museum of Colombo. On the Persian text, see Paranavithana (1933), "Tamil Inscription," 338-340.

Different aspects of these steles are significant: firstly, the practical communicative aspect. Both steles achieve the ‘translation of empire’ in the literal sense, by expressing the Ming universal claim in different languages. The Galle stele, for example, states in Chinese that Zheng He’s aim was to “announce imperial decrees to all foreign polities” [詔諭諸番], and in Tamil that “the great king [*rācā*] of Cīna” is the “overlord of kings.”⁸⁹ As argued earlier, early Ming multilingual ‘signs,’ just as modern evidence analysed in LLS, point into three temporal dimensions: back in time to their creators, into the future to the audiences selected to consume them (to be discussed below), and, through their non-random installation in space, to the (early Ming) ‘present’. The last aspect is significant: both steles were issued in the name of the Ming emperor but installed *outside* the empire (Figure 14). They point to their ‘present’ by attesting to the early Ming rulers’ impression that Sri Lanka (3,000 miles southeast of Nanjing) as well as the northernmost Amur river region in ‘Manchuria’ (1,750 miles north of Nanjing) somehow belonged, if not to China proper, then to a larger zone of influence, a kind of ‘informal empire,’ where Chinese still had significance, provided that it was accompanied by other languages.

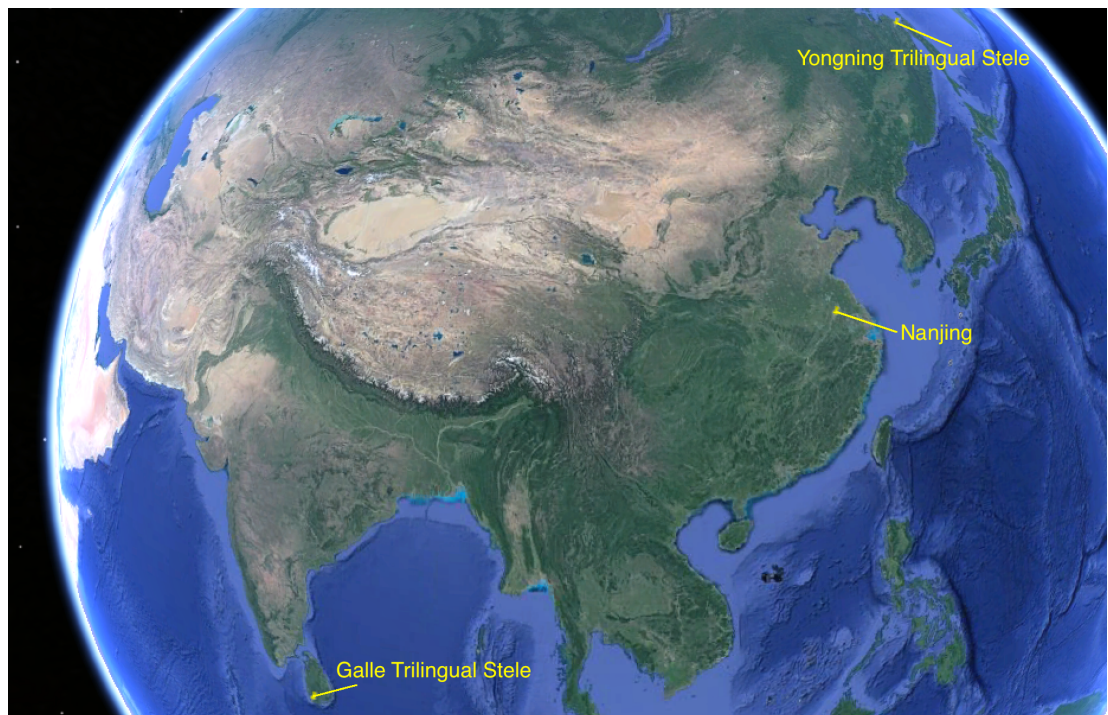


Figure 14. Trilingual steles of Galle (1409) and Yongning (1413): their installation in space⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Nagel (2001), “Chinese Inscription,” 385; Paranavithana (1933), “Tamil Inscription,” 336.

⁹⁰ Image Google Earth; legend J. S. Lotze, according to the known precise locations where the two steles were erected.

Secondly, there is the question of audience selection.⁹¹ A stele such as the one in Yongning transforms a natural space—in this case, the forests of the northernmost Amur river region—into a social, cultural, and political space. Through its language choices (Chinese, Mongolian, Jurchen) it selects and *expects* certain audiences in this space, such as the imminent arrival of Chinese-reading audiences far away from the empire proper.⁹² After all, Chinese is not the ‘substrate language’ of the area, the language of those who were historically most numerous and enduring in terms of demography.⁹³ With steles like these, the Ming were clearly speaking to larger audiences. However, did they tell the same story to all? In other words, where did the different texts of each stele reside on a continuum of ‘equivalence’? We find that both the Yongning and the Galle stele can more precisely be called ‘tri-version trilingual texts’ and not ‘translated texts’: the three versions are slightly different in both cases, a perfect illustration of audience selection.⁹⁴ They are, in this regard, comparable to multilingual steles from other contexts. Andrew Wilson has recently shown that the Neo-Punic parts in bilingual inscriptions in Roman North Africa did not simply translate the Latin, as had been previously assumed, but rephrased the message for local audiences—in contrast to the extended audiences of the empire as a whole.⁹⁵

Early Ming inscriptions worked similarly. While the Yongning and the Galle Stele, each in three different languages, provide identical lists of ‘gifts’ offered by the Ming embassies (such as gold, silver, silk, brassware, lacquerware, oil, and incense, in the case of Galle), other sections differ to some extent. As for the Yongning Stele, only the Chinese text describes the life of the “wild” [野] Jurchens, noting that these raw barbarians live simply by hunting and fishing and “do not produce the five grains (do not engage in agriculture) and do not manufacture cloth and silk; the only animals they domesticate are dogs” [不生五穀，不產布帛，畜養惟狗].⁹⁶ This text,

⁹¹ On audience selection, see Yaron Matras & Alex Robertson (2015), “Multilingualism in a Post-Industrial City: Policy and Practice in Manchester,” *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 309.

⁹² Similar kinds of audience selection and semiotisation of space, but for Chinatown in modern London, are described in Blommaert (2013), *Linguistic Landscapes*, 41-48.

⁹³ On the term ‘substrate language,’ see Blommaert (2013), *Linguistic Landscapes*, 55.

⁹⁴ ‘Bi-version bilingual texts’ appears as one of four basic categories of multilingual inscriptions in the ancient world in Mullen (2012), “Multiple Languages,” 15.

⁹⁵ Andrew Wilson (2012), “Neo-Punic and Latin Inscriptions in Roman North Africa: Function and Display,” in Mullen & James, *Multilingualism*, 265-316, esp. 267, 280, and 307.

⁹⁶ Quoted after Yang & Yang (2008), *Mingdai Dongbei jiangyu*, 90. For translations of the Jurchen and Mongolian texts on the Yongning Trilingual Stele (*Yongningsi bei* 永寧寺碑 ‘Yongning temple stele’), see Yang Yang 杨洋 (1982), *Mingdai Nuergen dushi ji qi weisuo yanjiu* 明代奴儿干都司及其卫所研究 [*The Ming Dynasty Nurgan Regional Military Commission and Its Guard-Battalions*] (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou shuhashe). On the Jurchen part, see also Ligeti (1961), “Inscriptions djurtchen.” The stele is held by the Arsenyev Primorye Museum in Vladivostok.

written from an outlook of perceived cultural superiority, was only meant to be read by a ‘colonising’ Chinese audience, not by the Jurchens themselves who lived in the stele’s vicinity. As for the Galle stele (Figure 15), there are differences in the religious meta-texts, honouring the competing traditions of Sri Lanka. While the Chinese version praises *Fo*, or “Buddha, the World-Honoured One” [佛世尊], for protecting Zheng He’s ships on their voyages across the oceans, the Persian version expresses gratitude towards *Allāh* and the saints of Islam, and the Tamil version praises the local Hindu god *Tenavarai Nāyaṇār*, an incarnation of Vishnu.

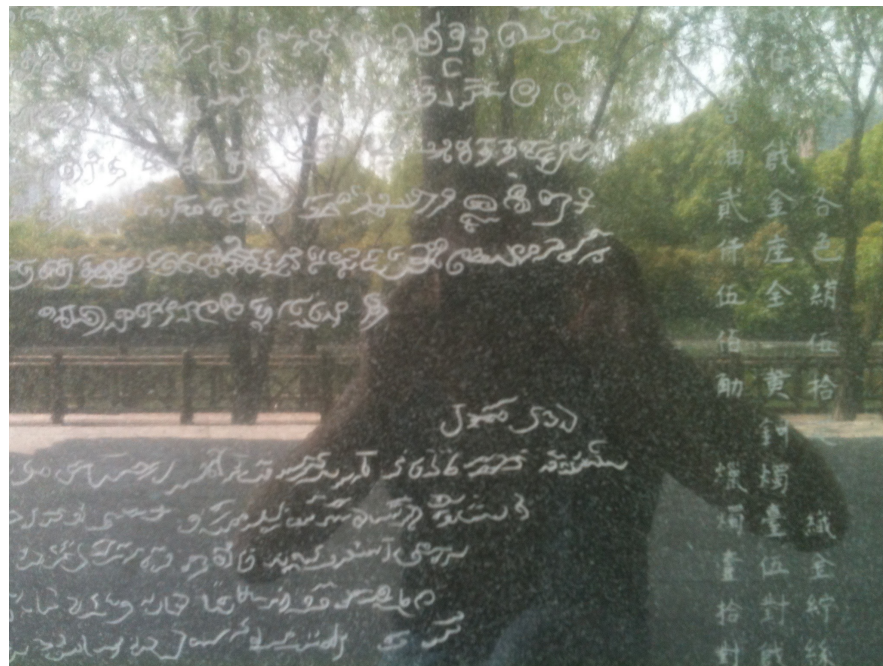


Figure 15. Face of the Galle Trilingual Stele (1409): replica in a park in modern Nanjing⁹⁷

This leads, thirdly, to the question of knowledge *behind* these artefacts. Doubtlessly the Galle Trilingual Stele can be seen as “straightforward propaganda,”⁹⁸ promoting the Ming imperial claim, but it is also *more*: that scribes in Nanjing knew about a rather ‘obscure’ local god on Sri Lanka, and could glorify him in the appropriate language and script, is perhaps one of the best pieces of evidence for the intercultural knowledge and competence of the Ming court. If we look at the steles not just as texts but also as physical artefacts, we further note that the cursive Persian and Tamil scripts on the Galle stele were almost certainly incised by artisans well trained in their carving. Although both scripts naturally contain curves which are not

⁹⁷ Chinese (right), Tamil (top), and Persian (bottom) can clearly be recognised. The stele replica stands amongst other artefacts in the above-mentioned *Zheng He Treasure Ship Ruins Park*, Nanjing. Photo J. S. Lotze, 10 April 2016.

⁹⁸ Haufler (2014), “Miracles and Salvation,” 214.

easily suited to stonework, the result looks mostly fluid and well-proportioned, although the Tamil letters are “unusually small in size for a stone inscription.”⁹⁹ In short, we can read in the Galle stele the Ming court’s cross-cultural competence (knowledge about specific local gods outside the empire), multilingual ability (the tri-version trilingual text), and the necessary artisanship to translate even less global alphabets such as Tamil into lapidary inscriptions.

Fourthly, there is the symbolic or emblematic aspect of such steles. The multilingualism of Yuan artefacts such as the Sulaiman stele (Figure 13) already transcended communicative functions. Like a footnote to the symbolic meaning of the scripts exhibited, the Sulaiman stele announces that “all [polities] have submitted to the one rule” [悉歸一統]. “Sailing the seas and climbing over mountains” [航海梯山] they hastened to acknowledge Mongol rule in China, so that “[every] *chi* of Earth and [every] *cun* of Heaven” [尺地寸天] became part of the universal empire.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, we might add, their scripts are exhibited to *symbolise* universal rule and claim authority over multiple heritages. The symbolic dimension can also be seen in the appearance of Tangut script in the Juyong Hexaglot. When the monument was built, the Tangut empire had already been extinct for over a century and its script had lost its significance: it was included for emblematic reasons to invoke the past glory of another ‘foreign’ dynasty in China. Multilingual ability had expressed the universality of rule since antiquity and across cultures. Pliny the Elder (23-79 AD), for example, asserts that “Mithridates, king of twenty-two nations, gave judgements in as many languages, in an assembly addressing each nation in turn without an interpreter.”¹⁰¹ In Mongol history and lore there are many similar examples, such as Rashīd al-Dīn applauding the Ilkhan Ghazan (r. 1296-1304) for his knowledge of “Arabic, Persian, Hindi, Kashmiri, Tibetan, Chinese, Frankish [*Farangi*], and a smattering of other languages” along with his native Mongolian.¹⁰² Regardless of whether Ghazan actually conversed in all those tongues: the point is that a famous and contemporaneous historian of the Mongol era, Rashīd al-Dīn, associates linguistic ability with imperial might and wisdom.

⁹⁹ Paranavithana (1933), “Tamil Inscription,” 332.

¹⁰⁰ Cleaves (1967), “Inscription of 1348,” plate 1; literally, “part of the Nine Possessions.”

¹⁰¹ “Mithridates duarum et viginti gentium rex totidem linguis iura dixit, pro contione singulas sine interprete adfatus.” Pliny the Elder (2015 [79 AD]), *Naturalis historia*, XXIV, in *The Natural History Book VII (with Book VIII 1-34)*, ed. Tyler Travillan (London: Bloomsbury Academic), 64.

¹⁰² Translation Allsen (2000), “Rasūlid Hexaglot,” 29. “Farangi” means roughly “European,” not a particular language.

Since this kind of symbolism had been even more important for the Mongols than for other universal empires (due to the *actually* unprecedented number of languages spoken in their realm), it seems logical that early Ming rulers tried to tap that source of ‘Mongol energy,’ just as they tapped other Mongol resources, such as the military.¹⁰³ Consider, again, the Yongning stele. In addition to its trilingual inscription proper, it bears a Buddhist mantra in four scripts: Chinese, Mongolian, Jurchen, and Tibetan. Few, if any, people living in the area around it would have been likely to read Tibetan—and that is exactly the crux of the matter. The entirety of early Ming multilingual artefacts (including those discussed in Chapter Two) does not only exist to communicate actual texts, but at least as much to woo subjects and neighbours into the orbit of the new dynasty by projecting a powerful image of Mongol universalism through a kind of *Sprachmagie*, or ‘magic of language’ (Walter Benjamin).¹⁰⁴ Whether court officials or commoners, people did not have to be able to read Mongolian or Persian stele inscriptions, Tibetan invocations on porcelains bowls, seal impressions in the Mongol-invented Phagspa script, or Sanskrit spells in the Mongol-introduced Lantsa script, in order to understand the message: *I am the Son of Heaven, I command many people and speak to you in the many languages of the Great Khan in whose footsteps I follow*. Not even an understanding of the Chinese parts of inscriptions would have been necessary to get this message. Even illiterates would presumably have recognised the presence of different scripts and grasped the symbolic overtones—just as one does not have to come with a Latin reading knowledge in order to pick up the indirect meanings in a Latin inscription near a statue of Mary in Antwerp (evoking a specific religious tradition), to quote one of Blommaert’s examples from modern LLS.¹⁰⁵

In the above sense, mastering foreign scripts became a symbol of universal empire for the Ming. Looking at them from that perspective, early Ming multilingual steles seem quite different from—to give an example from my own neighbourhood—multilingual signs in Platt Fields Park, Manchester, in English, Urdu, Arabic, Bengali, and five additional languages. At first glance, the purpose of those park signs is purely practical: to communicate the park rules to their audiences,

¹⁰³ This point is further supported by Craig Clunas (2007), *Empire of Great Brightness: Visual and Material Cultures of Ming China, 1368-1644* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 98-104, who argues that “it would be wrong to think of the public text of the Ming as being monoglot,” and discusses the presence of foreign languages in Ming society.

¹⁰⁴ Winfried Menninghaus (1980), *Walter Benjamins Theorie der Sprachmagie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp).

¹⁰⁵ Blommaert (2013), *Linguistic Landscapes*, 54.

Mancunians with their diverse backgrounds. However, a symbolic level is involved as well, as the City Council expresses through these signs that Manchester is an ‘open’ place that values diversity and can speak to its inhabitants in their many heritage languages. Yaron Matras and Alex Robertson have recently shown how the emerging new identity of Manchester consciously brands the city as multilingual to attract foreign investment.¹⁰⁶ Regardless of whether early Ming rulers followed a similarly conscious policy, ‘multilingual strategies’ (sending Tibetan-inscribed porcelains to Tibet, sending Jurchen-speaking Chinese envoys into the Jurchen borderlands) clearly attracted foreigners to Ming territory. Such immigration and diplomatic exchange, as the first three chapters as a whole have shown, did not only give symbolic prestige to the new dynasty but also greatly worked to the Ming’s benefit in practical terms, as illustrated by the employment of immigrants as translators or by profits from tributary trade.

4. Conclusion

This chapter has refuted the idea that, in contrast to their Mongol predecessors, the Ming had little symbolic use for non-Chinese scripts.¹⁰⁷ Very much in contrast, both practical and symbolic aspects of translation were significant to the Ming’s universal imperial claim. This claim served as a starting point for the current chapter. Not only did the name Ming itself continue a specific form of Mongol universalism by pointing to an idea instead of a place, I have further argued that the early Ming did assert itself as a universal empire in the sense of Bang and Kołodziejczyk (diverse populations, cosmopolitan literacies, empire as cosmic order, supremacy over subject rulers).¹⁰⁸ One criterion (the claim of primacy over various subject rulers through symbolic forms of diplomacy) has been analysed more thoroughly in the form of the early Ming ‘tributary system.’ My analysis of its local implementation at the *Bureau of Interpreters* has shown that, contrary to imperial rhetoric of self-sufficiency, profits from the system flowed in both directions. This illustrates Perdue’s recent remark that ‘tribute’ is a one-sided translation of the Chinese term *gong* 貢, meaning the

¹⁰⁶ Matras & Robertson (2015), “Multilingualism in a Post-Industrial City.”

¹⁰⁷ Crossley (1991), “Structure and Symbol,” 59.

¹⁰⁸ Bang & Kołodziejczyk (2012), “Elephant of India.”

exchange of gifts, a common practice in most early modern societies.¹⁰⁹ Through the *Bureau of Interpreters*—which managed tribute, trade, and translation—we have further seen the most practical and down-to-earth purposes of multilingual competence, in comparison to its symbolic aspects. Back from the local to the global, I have suggested that it was a crucial purpose of the Zheng He expeditions, themselves shaped by Mongol precedent, to awe foreign rulers into acceptance of the Ming emperor as their tributary overlord. Labelling the Ming ‘antiforeign’ is thus at least imprecise, as foreigners played a crucial role for the universal claim, both in rhetoric and in their actual physical presence at the capital. With all this in mind, I argued that the foundation of the *Bureau of Translators* should not be seen as ‘the usual’ institute for language mediation that would have existed anyway, but as part of a series of early Ming policies expressing universal imperial ambition, such as Zheng He’s westbound embassies on the sea and Yishiha’s northbound embassies on land. Significantly, both embassies installed trilingual steles abroad.

The application of concepts drawn from Linguistic Landscape Studies (LLS) to these steles has shown that their functions were both communicative (practical) and emblematic (symbolic). They were communicative, as they translated the early Ming world order to wider audiences, and emblematic, because their professional multilingualism evoked the Mongol era and symbolised the universality of Ming rule. Using the framework developed earlier, we might also say that these steles achieved the ‘translation of empire’ both literally (by translating the Ming claim into different languages) and metaphorically (by supporting the *translatio imperii*, the transfer of legitimacy from Yuan to Ming, through continuation of Mongol practices in the realm of written language). If we re-read Chapter Two through this focus, we can apply the insights of the current chapter to most of its material as well. While the *Bureau of Translators* was certainly a very useful institution (given the extensive Ming territory and its ‘informal empire,’ or affiliated ‘tributary states,’ communication in only one language did not seem feasible), it was also a symbol: universal rulers speak the languages of all their subjects. While bilingual Ming edicts were clearly communicative, they also brought to mind Mongol power. While there must have been individual scholarly interests behind the printing of a bilingual Tibetan canon under Yongle, it was also printed for prestige and to represent imperial might in the

¹⁰⁹ Peter Perdue (2015), “The Tenacious Tribute System,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 24, 1008-1009. See also the classic study by Marcel Mauss (2000 [1925]), *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* [*Essai sur le don*], trans. W. D. Halls (New York: W.W. Norton).

form of multilingual ability.¹¹⁰ As I have argued, such ability had expressed the universality of rule across time and cultures, especially in the Eurasian Mongol-based empires (one of them the Yuan in China), due to the unprecedented number of languages spoken. Polyglot Yuan texts were not just communicative but claimed authority over diverse heritages. Early Ming imitations followed the same logic. Thus, early Ming multilingualism could not be grasped without the universal claim. Applying further concepts from LLS, such as audience selection, I have shown how the Galle and Yongning steles transform natural space into socio-political space and, through language choices, select and *expect* certain audiences in such demarcated space, such as the arrival of Chinese-reading audiences in the Amur river region outside the empire proper. Both steles have been analysed as ‘tri-version trilingual texts’ whose three versions tell slightly different stories to different audiences. I have argued that the Galle stele exemplifies the Ming court’s cross-cultural competence (knowledge about a specific local god on Sri Lanka who is glorified in the appropriate language and script), multilingual ability (the three text versions themselves), and employment of specialised artisans able to translate even less global scripts such as Tamil into lapidary inscriptions.

While this chapter has shown how the existence of different languages was handled by early Ming rulers in a way that they symbolised imperial unity, Chapter Four will investigate situations in which linguistic differences are perceived rather contrarily: as obstacles in the civilising process which the Ming, in their self-perception, were destined to advance. In other words, I will look at the much-debated issue of ‘sinicisation,’ both as a modern analytical category and as a political strategy that was consciously formulated by early Ming rulers and intellectuals.

¹¹⁰ On this point, see also Kerlouégan (2011-2012), “Printing for Prestige.”

CHAPTER FOUR

Between multilingualism and sinicisation

Sinicisation, as an analytical concept, has come under attack in the last few decades. Standen calls it “illogical, narrowly focused and Sinocentric.”¹ Victor H. Mair sweeps it, as “an outmoded notion,” onto the trash heap of historiography.² Such criticism is justified if directed against the untenable idea that “those coming to China were fundamentally changed by the encounters whereas, by implication, the Chinese never were.”³ Chen Yuan’s 陳垣 (1880-1971) classic study, for example, marshals ample data to show that Chinese culture had largely absorbed its alien conquerors during the Mongol era but overlooks evidence that would point the other way, to how the Mongols had changed China.⁴ Ultimately, the idea of sinicisation—both in the twentieth century and in its Ming era form—can be traced back to the classic Confucian claim that barbarians submit voluntarily to the transforming influence of ‘Chinese’ morality. Even Serruys, a pioneer in Mongol legacy research, clings to that tradition, assuming that “the impressive achievements of Chinese culture (...) could not fail to attract (...) the better elements among the non-Chinese residents.”⁵ One of his reviewers, the sinologist Eugen Feifel (1902-1999), has phrased the idea in more glaring terms: “The immense cultural gap between China and her neighbors made the latter the more jealous (...) the more they suffered from their own backwardness (...) Since China had more to offer than she needed to receive, in the end she paid dearly for her cultural superiority which she wanted to enjoy in peace.”⁶ Yet, both Serruys and Feifel first and foremost repeat official early Ming rhetoric itself. In particular, the idea that profits flowed only in one direction, has been refuted in Chapter Three.

Long ago already, Chen Yinke challenged the conventional wisdom of sinicisation theory by spelling out the many foreign borrowings of the Tang, the most

¹ Standen (2013), “Foreign Conquerors,” 33.

² Victor H. Mair (2001), “The Origins and Impact of Literati Culture,” in *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, ed. Victor H. Mair (New York: Columbia University Press), 13.

³ Standen (2013), “Foreign Conquerors,” 35.

⁴ Chen, Yuan 陳垣 (2008 [1923-1927]). *Yuan Xiyuren huahua kao* 元西域人華化考 [*Yuan-Era Sinicisation of Western Regions People*] (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe); translated by Ch’ien Hsing-hai & L. Carrington Goodrich (1989), *Western and Central Asians in China under the Mongols: Their Transformation into Chinese* (Nettetal: Steyler).

⁵ Serruys (1957), “Remains of Mongol Customs,” 139-140.

⁶ Eugen Feifel (1968), review of Serruys (1967), *Sino-Mongol Relations II*, in *Monumenta Serica* 27, 439.

glorious ‘Chinese’ dynasty: the ruling house was culturally a product of the frontier ‘barbarian’ culture and the royal family of largely Turkish descent.⁷ The crux of the matter is often simply that it is not made clear from the onset how ‘sinicisation’ is to be understood. The concept is rightly criticised if it postulates *one-way* cultural change: China absorbs and changes foreigners and invaders, but is itself not changed. At the same time, it should not be denied that “those coming to China were fundamentally changed.” They were indeed—Chen Yuan and Yao Congwu 姚從晤 have shown how non-Chinese mastered various fields of formerly distinctively Chinese cultural pursuit—the point is though that this was only one side of the coin.⁸ ‘The Chinese’ (in varying forms, depending on class, gender, etc.) were changed, too, and so were their institutions. Mongol legacy in the Ming provides abundant proof of that.

Looking at this question from the language angle, three spheres emerge in which it is valid to speak of sinicisation. First, the Yuan saw ‘voluntary’ partial self-sinicisation of Mongols through language choices.⁹ Second, sinicisation (not understood in ethnic terms but as a ‘civilising process’) was an openly formulated political strategy, or at least political theory of the early Ming administration. Third, language barriers were perceived as obstacles in this very process of sinicisation, which the Ming, in their self-perception, were destined to advance.

1. Self-sinicisation through language choice: Yuan to Ming

“For it hath ever been the use of the conqueror, to despise the language of the conquered, and to force him by all means to learn his.”¹⁰

Such is the assessment of the poet Edmund Spenser (1552-1599), put into the mouth of a character in one of his plays, and it is not meant critically but highly affirmative: Spenser wished to see the ‘Irish language’ (Gaelic) replaced by English. Indeed, European rulers imposed their languages on the native inhabitants of their empires, at

⁷ Chen (1963 [1940s]), *Sui Tang zhidu yuanyuan*. See also Lewis (2009), *Cosmopolitan Empire*, 1-2.

⁸ Chen (2008), *Yuan Xiyuren*; Yao Congwu 姚從晤 (1955), “Hubilie duiyu Hanhua taidu de fenxi 忽必烈對於漢化態度的分析 [Kublai Khan’s Attitude towards Sinicisation],” *Dalu zazhi* 大陸雜誌, 22-31.

⁹ Conversely, the Yuan also saw voluntary ‘self-mongolisation’ of Chinese through language choices, a term that only sounds quirky because the *one-way* cultural change paradigm lingers on. Just as Mongols began to learn Chinese before and after conquering China, Chinese studied Mongolian to further their careers, as I discussed in Chapter Two.

¹⁰ Edmund Spenser (1845 [1596]), *A Veue on the Present State of Ireland*, in: *The Works of Edmund Spenser: With Observations on His Life and Writings* (London: Washbourne), 499.

least on the local elites. Spencer's assessment is no longer true, however, if we look at the aftermath of the Mongol conquest of China in the thirteenth century: here, the opposite was the case. The conquerors learned the language of the conquered. This process, which can be described as voluntary self-sinicisation in the domain of language, left a legacy for the early Ming in the form of bilingual individuals.

Such a process, of course, occurred over generations. Early Mongol rulers such as Genghis Khan did not speak Chinese. When Chinese officials delivered oral reports, their words had to be interpreted into Mongolian. In his discussions with the Daoist Qiu Chuji 丘處機 (1148-1227), Genghis relied on Yelü Ahai 耶律阿海 who interpreted Chinese into Mongolian and was himself of Khitan descent. At another meeting between the two, the interpreter was a certain Alixian 阿里鮮 from the Tangut people.¹¹ David Wright has shown that while evidence abounds regarding the value the illiterate Genghis Khan attached to the importance of writing (his rule saw the adaption of Old Uyghur as the Mongol empire's script), very little suggests that he took steps to become literate himself.¹² This makes Herbert Franke's assertion that Genghis could read Uyghur problematic.¹³ A similar situation existed shortly before the Jurchen Jin dynasty foundation. The protocol of a negotiation of 1120 between the Song and the Jurchen leader Aguda (later emperor Taizu of Jin) explicitly states that Aguda relied on the services of an interpreter. Thus, two years prior to his becoming emperor of Northern China, Aguda did not speak any form of Chinese.¹⁴

In contrast to Genghis, Kublai Khan—grandson of Genghis and founder of the Yuan dynasty in China—spoke some Chinese, but apparently quite poorly. For meetings with his advisor Xu Heng 許衡 (1209-1281) he chose a good interpreter whom he would occasionally correct.¹⁵ Nevertheless, his orientation towards the culture of the Central Realm (manifest in scores of projects to translate Chinese works into Mongolian) was strong enough to arouse the concern of Mongol traditionalists. Under Kublai, specialists imported to China from the Western Regions

¹¹ See Li Zhichang 李志常 (author) & Arthur Waley (translator) (2014 [early 13th century]). *The Travels of an Alchemist: The Journey of the Taoist, Ch'ang-ch'un, from China to the Hindukush at the Summons of Chingiz Khan, Recorded by his Disciple, Li Chih -ch'ang* (London: Routledge). For Alixian, see p. 119.

¹² David Curtis Wright (1999). "Was Chinggis Khan Literate?," in Juha Janhunen & Volker Rybatzki (eds.) (1999), *Writing in the Altaic World* (Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society), 305-312.

¹³ Franke (1952), "Mongol Emperors."

¹⁴ Dagmar Thiele (1971), *Der Abschluss eines Vertrages: Diplomatie zwischen Sung- und Chin-Dynastie, 1117-1123* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner), 170.

¹⁵ Walter Fuchs (1946), "Analecta zur mongolischen Übersetzungsliteratur der Yüan-Zeit," *Monumenta Serica* 11, 38.

often did not speak Chinese either. For example, that Zhamaluding (Jamāl al-Dīn), a Persian-speaking astronomer at the Yuan court, never learned Chinese (or was at least not fluent enough to get along on his own) can be inferred from the fact that he was provided with a personal interpreter—if one is willing to take the sheer presence of an interpreter as evidence.¹⁶

Yuan emperors further improved their Chinese proficiency in the generations after Kublai. Franke has shown that later Mongol emperors made serious efforts to master Chinese, both spoken and written, and knew more about Chinese culture than traditionally assumed.¹⁷ In the lower ranks, many followed their example. This is voluntary self-sinicisation in the realm of language, working from top to bottom: a language choice entered into freely for pragmatic reasons. Allsen even points out that the Yuan court began to encourage Mongols to learn Chinese as early as 1260, a good decade before the foundation of the dynasty, by attaching language schools to military units.¹⁸ Further evidence is found in the examination system, which was at first abolished, as examinations were “feared by warriors as the haven of literate foes,” but reintroduced in 1313.¹⁹ The Mongols made sure though that quotas for Chinese would be balanced by equal quotas for Mongol and *Semu* (Central Eurasian) candidates. Regulations show that non-Chinese candidates had to know the *Four Books* (*Sishu* 四書) of Confucianism and were expected to write a short essay on current politics.²⁰ Such regulations would be quite pointless, unless there were indeed Mongols and Central Eurasians who studied Chinese literature. Hence, we can expect many bilingual Mongols and bilingual immigrants at the end of the Yuan and in the early Ming. Some of them were employed as translators by the new regime and are known to us by name, for example the Hanlin official and glossary compiler Khoninchi, as I have shown in Chapter One.

¹⁶ Benno van Dalen (2007), “Zhamaluding,” in Thomas A. Hockey, Virginia Trimble, & Katherine Bracher, *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers* (New York), 1263. It has to be kept in mind that interpreters sometimes fulfilled a purely symbolic function. In the late Roman Republic (509-27 BC), most senators could have followed the Greek-language reports of envoys rather easily. However, a law stipulated that interpreters had to translate into Latin, the imperial language and only medium worthy of intercultural communication. See Jörn Albrecht (1998), *Literarische Übersetzung: Geschichte, Theorie, kulturelle Wirkung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft), 29-30.

¹⁷ Franke (1952), “Mongol Emperors.”

¹⁸ Allsen (2000), “Rasūlid Hexaglot,” 37.

¹⁹ Elman (2000), *Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, 30.

²⁰ *Yuan History*, juan 81, 2026. See also Elman (2000), *Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, 29-56, esp. 30-34.

Language skills of early Ming subjects with ‘Mongol migration background’ were varied. Some must have been ignorant about the Central Realm and did not speak its language very well or not at all: if, for example, they arrived after 1368 for the first time, as surrendered soldiers or as immigrants who saw career opportunities. Others must have been fluent in Chinese, due to the mechanisms discussed above, and familiar with the country. Consider the following *Veritable Records* entry of 1387, a letter written by Hongwu to his son Zhu Di, the future Yongle emperor, discussing the formation of a Mongol army body at Beiping 北平 (Beijing):

Two officials of the former Yuan, Hala’er (Qalar) of the Asu (Asud, a Mongol clan) and Bayanhuli (Bayan-quri), are now entrusted with the duties of commandants and put in command of Mongol troops. (...) They are both well acquainted with the customs of Beiping [故元舊官阿速哈刺兒，伯顏忽里二人，今授以指揮之職令其管領達達軍士。 (...) 北平風土素所諳練].²¹

As they knew customs, they were probably also familiar with the Chinese language. However, speaking did not necessarily entail literacy. As pointed out by Yongle in 1403, “the Mongols amongst our military officers often cannot read” [武臣中有韃靼人多不識字] so that it is “difficult to entrust them with administrative tasks” [難委以政].²² In another early Ming work, a similar claim is made: that in the Yuan the *beiren* 北人 ‘Northerners’ (Mongols and Jurchens) “could not handle characters” (*bu shi zi* 不識字), yet were employed for high offices. The context shows that *bu shi zi* cannot mean fully illiterate, as it does today. The situation was similar to medieval Europe where *illiteratus* usually meant ‘ignorant of Latin’ rather than ‘illiterate’ *per se*.²³ *Bu shi zi* then indicates ignorance of cosmopolitan literary Chinese, not of writing as such. After all, the Mongols officials in question *could* write, just not very well: some of their mistakes were so silly that “whoever saw it, had to laugh” [見者為笑].²⁴ The written language was naturally a requirement for a career in administration, even in the military: not for common soldiers but for higher commands, because some orders had to be written and some military officers (*wuchen* 武臣) would serve as governors in peripheral districts. The Ming military examination system mirrored the civil one and included essay writing and literacy tests.²⁵

²¹ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Hongwu, *juan* 181, 2734; entry of 21 April 1387.

²² *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Yongle, *juan* 24, 442.

²³ Burke (2004), *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, 49.

²⁴ Ye Ziqi 葉子奇, *Caomuzi* 草木子 [*Master of Herbs and Trees*] (preface 1378), *juan* 4 (下), 10.

²⁵ The very early Ming did not separate civil and military examinations. See Rui Wang (2013), *The Chinese Imperial Examination System: An Annotated Bibliography* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press), 13.

2. Sinicisation as an early Ming political strategy

A second reason to speak of sinicisation is that it was a conscious political strategy. ‘Sinicisation’ is not only a later theoretical concept invented by historians but a policy the early Ming were quite keen on implementing, whether successful or not. In 1378, Hongwu put the cards openly on the table:

Employing Xia to change the barbarians (*yong Xia bian yi* 用夏變夷) is the way of the ancients. Now former Yuan officials and those who surrendered should permanently settle within the empire, so that they will submit to the teachings of the sages of our Central Realm, gradually learn social customs and right conduct, and get rid of their old practices [用夏變夷古之道也。今所獲故元官并降人宜內徙，使之服我中國聖人之教，漸摩禮義，以革其故俗].²⁶

‘Xia,’ as it appears above, is often too easily translated as ‘China,’ which is possibly distorting. Custom in the sense of civilised behaviour was not perceived in national or ethnic terms: while it happened to reside mainly with the Central Realm (China), the heart of civilisation, it was in theory universal. Hongwu’s stance can thus be called the early Ming sinicisation theory, if sinicisation is not understood in an overly ethnic sense as ‘making people Chinese.’ Similarly, Yongle expected that strangers would in time be sinicised, or rather civilised: “if barbarians enter the Central Realm, they will be Central-Realm-ed” [夷而入於中國，則中國之].²⁷ One means was encouraging cross-ethnic marriages, demonstrating again that labelling the Ming as ‘antiforeign’ or ‘isolationist’ is at least imprecise (‘antiforeign’ would rather evoke a ban of cross-ethnic marriages): “all Mongols and Westerners (*Semu*) shall marry Chinese persons” [凡蒙古色目人、聽與中國人為婚姻].²⁸ As shown earlier, many Ming soldiers who participated in the invasion of Yunnan in 1382 married local women. Remarkably, there had already been efforts to ‘sinicise’ the region under Mongol Yuan rule. That we should not equate sinicisation with dull conformity, is evidenced by the policies of Sayyid Ajjal Shams al-Din, Yunnan’s first governor under the Yuan, who ‘sinicised’ by promoting simply every ‘civilised’ system of thought and social practice he had at hand: Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, and Christianity.²⁹

²⁶ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Hongwu, *juan* 117, 1912; dated 15 March 1378.

²⁷ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Yongle, *juan* 134, 1642.

²⁸ *Great Ming Code*, article 122: “Marriages of Mongols and *Semu* people” [蒙古色目人婚姻]. Translation after Farmer (1995), *Early Ming Legislation*, 82-83; Jiang (2011), *Great Ming Code*, 88.

²⁹ On sinicisation as historical processes that were never unilateral in nature, see Peter J. Katzenstein (2012), “Sinicization in Comparative Perspective,” in *Sinicization and the Rise of China*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge), 209-241.

Prohibitions from speaking “barbarian languages,” or *huyu* 胡語, were occasionally—at least in theory—seen as part of sinicisation policy. Immediately in 1368, the Hongwu administration criticised that the Yuan had replaced the “institutions of the Central Realm” [中國之制] with “barbarian customs” [胡俗], especially regarding attire. But not only that, some subjects even went so far as to “change their surnames for barbarian names and got used to speaking the barbarian language” [易其姓氏為胡名，習胡語]. This could no longer be tolerated:

Braided hair, hair buns, barbarian clothes, barbarian languages, and barbarian surnames are all forbidden. (...) Now, after over a hundred years of barbarian customs, everything returns to the old [traditions] of the Central Realm [其辮髮、椎髻、胡服、胡語、胡姓，一切禁止。 (...) 于是百有餘年胡俗，悉復中國之舊矣].³⁰

Such prohibitions from speaking barbarian languages (as part of a larger parcel of ‘foreign’ cultural practices) show that language administration was not just an issue between China and her neighbours but also inside the empire proper—and giving up native languages could be considered part of sinicisation. In a similar vein, the early Ming official Zeng Bingzheng, already mentioned in Chapter One, advised to order foreigners “to stop [using] their foreign language (*fanyu* 番語), so that we be able to understand and handle them, and devise ways of dealing with them” [絕其番語，庶得辨認可以斟酌處].³¹ In 1449, to give yet another example, the court was informed that inhabitants of Guangdong’s Qin subprefecture [欽州] (technically Ming subjects) dressed and spoke in a way very similar to those of the adjacent Vietnam, whereupon officials were encouraged to enforce a sinicisation policy that included language planning. Qin inhabitants were to dress like people in China and “village schools” (*xiangxue* 鄉學) had to be established—decidedly with a Chinese-language curriculum, as the desired result was that people “change their language and all speak the *Hua* language” [變其語言悉從華言], that is, some form of Chinese.³²

These sources raise a number of questions. Most importantly, when the Ming founder and his official Zeng suggest to make foreigners stop using their foreign languages, *huyu* or *fanyu*, where did they intend to ban its use? Everywhere? In the

³⁰ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Hongwu, *juan* 30, 525. Issued on 29 February 1368.

³¹ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Hongwu, *juan* 109, 1815. Zeng’s memorial of 1376 does certainly not imply that foreigners knew *only* foreign languages. They needed Chinese in business and administration but probably continued speaking heritage languages at home and amongst themselves, just as many immigrant communities today.

³² *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Zhengtong, *juan* 177, 3418. Dated 8 May 1449.

court? On the street? At home? Equally, when village schools were ordered to make everybody speak Chinese, the *Hua* language, did that mean *only* Chinese? Or did it imply that people should learn Chinese as a *lingua franca* in addition to their native languages? The last option is well-known from other empires, even from those that were unconnected to Eurasia. Rulers of the Inca empire (1438-1533), for instance, insisted that conquered people learn the *lingua franca* Quechua, *in addition* to their native language.³³ If the Ming followed the same approach, ‘Chinese’ (*Huayan* 華言) in the source above would probably refer to the *guanhua* ‘official language’ form, based on the Nanjing dialect.³⁴

Further reflections and evidence suggest that private use was indeed not targeted by the early Ming. After all, even in the era of nationalism in nineteenth-century Europe, few states seriously tried to stop the private life of a minority language, as long as it did not question the public supremacy of the ‘national’ language: the premodern Ming state would have had even less means to enforce such prohibitions on an empire-wide scale.³⁵ This is corroborated by the fact that much later the same complaint is voiced. In 1491, He Qiaoxin 何喬新, head of the *Ministry of Punishment*, or *Xingbu* 刑部, is concerned about the fact that “people of the capital have the habit [to speak in] barbarian languages and [wear] barbarian clothes” [都民習胡語、胡服] which should be forbidden.³⁶ With all this in mind, it seems likely that non-Chinese languages served as markers of distinction for certain elites of the old regime, creating networks of power that could not be controlled easily by the Ming. As shown in Chapter Two, Persian had been such a language of distinction—and science—for scholars of the *Islamic Astronomical Bureau*. Prohibitions to speak *huyu* or *fanyu* then mainly targeted the use of foreign languages in court and other official contexts. Here, indeed, Chinese was reinstalled as *the* imperial language, in contrast to one imperial language amongst others in Yuan times.

What did sinicisation as an early Ming political strategy mean in practice? As hinted at in Chapter One, the learning of customs (*li* 禮) and right conduct in society (*yi* 義) were crucial: lemmata 738 and 739 of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations*.³⁷ Did

³³ Michael Andrew Malpass (2009), *Daily Life in the Inca Empire* (Westport: Greenwood Press), 31; Robert Yagelski (2000), *Literacies and Technologies* (New York: Longman), 131.

³⁴ As elaborated in the introduction, in the Ming, just as in modern China, many different, often mutually unintelligible Chinese speech varieties were spoken.

³⁵ On linguistic nationalism in nineteenth-century Europe, see Hobsbawm (1997), *Age of Empire*, 146, 149-151, 156.

³⁶ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Zhengde, *juan* 165, 3200.

³⁷ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Hongwu, *juan* 26, 404. For the lemmata, see Appendix B.

Hongwu see Chinese as something like the ‘language of civilisation’ and proficiency in it as the necessary condition for successful acquisition of *li* and *yi*, when he declared ‘barbarian languages’ forbidden in the above-quoted 1368 edict? It cannot be ruled out—but the sources never make such a point explicitly. If prohibitions are legitimised at all it is for purely practical reasons, such as in Zeng’s memorial with the aim to “understand and handle” people. At this juncture we should recall that Hongwu’s prohibition from speaking barbarian languages was part of a larger parcel of prohibited ‘foreign’ cultural practices. Foreign surnames were mentioned in the same 1368 edict. In the context of sinicisation, we would expect the early Ming to persuade or force foreigners to adopt Chinese surnames as another means of acculturation. Surprisingly though, the exact opposite is the case. In 1370, Hongwu noted disapprovingly that

“after entering office many [foreigners] change their surnames and personal names. We are worried that with the passing of years their sons and grandsons might become ignorant of their origins. Truly, this is not the way the rulers of antiquity dealt with descent groups” [入仕之後或多更姓名。朕慮歲久其子孫相傳昧其本源。誠非先王致謹氏族之道].³⁸

In 1376, Hongwu complained again that “recently, all Mongol and Westerners (*Semu*) are changing [their names] to Chinese (*Han*) surnames and there is no difference [between them and] the Chinese (*Hua*) people” [近來蒙古色目之人多改為漢姓，與華人無異].³⁹ Apparently, such a reduction of difference was not the main aim of sinicisation policy. But what was the point of it then?

We might suspect that Hongwu’s principal worries were not related to foreigners adopting Chinese names but to the opposite case: the adaption of non-Chinese names by persons of Chinese descent. In 1367 already, Hongwu complained that his contemporaries had “forgotten the surnames of their forefathers from the Central Realm and instead turned to the animal names of the barbarian troublemakers and consider them laudatory titles” [忘中國祖宗之姓，反就胡虜禽獸之名，以為美稱].⁴⁰ In 1368, the Ming administration again expressed “contempt” [厭] for such practices and declared them forbidden. What was at stake if a ‘Chinese’ person adopted a ‘non-Chinese’ name? To answer this question, it will be helpful to re-

³⁸ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Hongwu, *juan* 51, 1000.

³⁹ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Hongwu, *juan* 109, 2862.

⁴⁰ Edict issued on 15 November 1367. *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Hongwu, *juan* 26, 403. “Animal names” [禽獸之名] might allude to Mongolian and Turkish or Uyghur names such as Noqai (dog), Buqa (bull), and Aslan (lion).

examine the opening line of Hongwu's 'sinicisation edict' discussed in the first paragraph of this section: "*Employing Xia to change the barbarians* [用夏變夷] is the way of the ancients." The first four characters form an oft-used slogan in imperial rhetoric that appears as early as in Confucian anecdotes of the fourth century BC: "I have heard of *employing Xia to change the barbarians*, but never of [Xia] being changed towards barbarian ways" [吾聞用夏變夷者，未聞變於夷者也].⁴¹ Clearly, this ideology of inevitable *one-way cultural change* might lose persuasiveness in the eyes of some if Central Realm inhabitants would *en masse* be attracted to things or even just surnames associated with the 'outside.'

That the ideology of one-way cultural change never had a strong anchor in reality is evident and, as argued earlier, sinicisation as a concept is rightly criticised if it appears in this form. Horses and chariots, to give a general but important example, came from 'outside' the original Chinese cultural sphere but became features so central to military power and imperial ceremony that they soon felt completely 'Chinese.'⁴² As Chapter Three has shown, horses were still one of the most important Chinese imports in the early Ming. In particular, the Ming took over institutions, people, and ideas from the Mongols, as this thesis amply illustrates. I will give one specific example, related to the topic of translation. It has been fairly overlooked in scholarship that the names of both Ming translation bureaus (the *Huitong guan* or *Bureau of Interpreters*, and the *Siyi guan* or *Bureau of Translators*) were originally introduced by 'foreign' dynasties in China. The first-ever institution called *Huitong guan* was created by the Jurchen Jin (1115-1234) to accommodate Southern Song envoys (a courtesy not returned by the Song). The second *Huitong guan* was established by the Mongols in China in 1274. The third *Huitong guan* is the one inherited and transformed by the early Ming.⁴³ Similarly, the name *Siyi guan* was not a Ming invention. The earliest institution of that name had existed at the Luoyang court of the Northern Wei dynasty 北魏 (365-534)—a time when Buddhism and many other foreign ideas were introduced and became established—and served as a residence for envoys and merchants.⁴⁴ We can thus see both *guan*-designations as

⁴¹ *Mengzi*, ch. *Teng wen gong shang* 滕文公上, 4.

⁴² Even early Chinese words for horses and horse-drawn chariots are possibly borrowed from Indo-European languages, such as Tocharian. See Thekla Wiebusch & Uri Tadmor (2009), "Loanwords in Mandarin Chinese," in *Loanwords in the World's Languages: A Comparative Handbook*, ed. Martin Haspelmath & Uri Tadmor (Berlin: De Gruyter), 578.

⁴³ The best work on the institutional history of both *guan* remains Pelliot (1948), "Sseu-yi-kouan."

⁴⁴ See the *Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記 [*Record of the Monasteries of Luoyang*] (mid-6th century), *juan* 3, 9 and 14. Note that in important distinction to the Ming-era *Siyi guan*, there is no indication that the Northern Wei *Siyi guan* trained a Chinese staff in foreign languages.

cases of not only ‘Mongol’ legacy but of ‘foreign’ legacy in China in general. The obvious question, *why* both names of translation bureaus can be traced back to institutions of non-Chinese dynasties, I cannot answer yet. Did foreign dynasties perhaps feel greater motivation to establish hostels to stay in contact with their clientele outside of China proper?

In any case, even more interesting than rebutting the ideological premise of one-way cultural change is the question: what encouraged early Ming subjects to ‘translate’ their family names from Chinese into Mongolian or *vice versa* in the first place? In the Yuan, Mongols and *Semu* people were favoured over Chinese so that from a practical perspective it could have been beneficial to discard typical Chinese family names and pass as a Mongol. This explains the tendency amongst Chinese to adopt ‘animal names,’ as lamented by Hongwu. Remarkably, even thirty-five years after the fall of the Yuan, Chinese in the Ming army engaged in such cross-ethnic identity swaps. In 1403, Yongle spotted in his military some “Central Realm people passing under Mongol names, in order to avoid administrative work” [中國人亦有冒韃靼名以避政事者]: admittedly a clever move, as Mongol officers were known to be often illiterate (at least in Chinese), as elaborated above.⁴⁵ With the rise of the Ming the tables turned and many Mongols took Chinese names in order to ‘appear normal.’ Muslims, in particular, adopted Han names to remove suspicions of possible descent from Muslims who had served the Mongols.⁴⁶ As discussed in Chapter One, the Mongols had employed Muslims particularly as money lenders and tax collectors, thereby diverting Chinese hostility from themselves. With that in mind, it makes sense that some Muslims—official early Ming tolerance notwithstanding—would adopt typical Chinese names to avoid trouble. Many similar examples from world history could be cited, such as an entry in a register of Skopje in the Ottoman empire, dated 1455, reporting about an “infidel” named Oliver who procured some land and blended in: “After this, Oliver became a Muslim with the name Süleymān.”⁴⁷

While forbidding foreigners to adopt Chinese surnames seems to run counter to sinicisation policies, this contradiction makes sense if we consider the core Confucian concept of loyalty (*zhong* 忠) to clan and family, hinted at in the Hongwu edict of 1370 which fears that foreigners “might become ignorant of their origin.” As Atwood noted, such a concept had been a universal principle of political life in Yuan

⁴⁵ Yongle in an address of the year 1403 to Liu Jin 劉儁, President of the Ministry of Military Affairs (*Bingbu* 兵部). *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Yongle, *juan* 24, 442.

⁴⁶ See Benite, “Marrano Emperor,” 283.

⁴⁷ Quoted after Victor Ménage (n.d.), *Ottoman Institutions Sourcebook* (unpublished), 139.

Confucianism: every person, whether Mongol, Uyghur, Han or Nan (Northern or Southern Chinese), was expected to honour and remember their particular lineage, while being loyal to the Mongol dynasty as a supra-ethnic civilisation.⁴⁸ In this sense, Hongwu simply followed Yuan-era political ideals. In addition, the Ming might have tried to get rid of opportunists who would change their names repeatedly, depending on political circumstances. Finally, Patricia Buckley Ebrey rightly points out that some Ming subjects did not feel entirely comfortable with the concept of Confucian culturalism, the idea that any ‘foreigner’ could theoretically be transformed into a ‘Chinese,’ which collided with “equally strongly held views about ancestors and the connections between ancestors and identity” or just plain xenophobia.⁴⁹ Still, the contradiction seems not completely resolved. If we remember that some foreigners became successful merchants in the early Ming, we would expect that adopting Chinese names (at least *in addition* to their foreign names) was a necessity that would be welcomed by the Chinese. To illustrate this with a modern example, consider the Thai artist Apichatpong Weerasethakul, whose name sounds a bit difficult for non-Thais and who thus adopted the nickname Joe in international circles. Would such a procedure not have been helpful to early Ming Chinese as well?

Whatever the case, official rhetoric and realpolitik were again not always congruent and Hongwu himself granted Chinese names to foreigners. Several early Ming translators held foreign and Chinese names simultaneously. In 1376, a scholar with the Mongolian name Huonichi 火你赤 (a transliteration of Khoninchi) became a compiler in the Hanlin Academy, where he helped to create the *Sino-Barbarian Translations*. Subsequently, his name was changed to He Zhuang 霍莊.⁵⁰ At the same time, he was known as Huo Yuanjie 火原潔, a slightly sinicised form of his Mongolian name Khoninchi.⁵¹ Another example is the Ma family which spawned the translators Ma Shayihei and Ma Hama, discussed in Chapter One. Family members kept their original Arabic or Persian names *and* adopted typical Chinese names or at least courtesy names.⁵² The important point is that these contradictions of early Ming

⁴⁸ Christopher Pratt Atwood (2008), review of Brose (2008), *Uyghurs in the Mongol Empire*, in *T'oung Pao* 94, 195. Atwood's discussion of Mongol-era name policies (ibid., 196) further supports my argument.

⁴⁹ Patricia Ebrey (2003), *Women and the Family in Chinese History* (London: Routledge), 170.

⁵⁰ See Serruys (1959), *Sino-Mongol Relations* I, 168.

⁵¹ See Roy Andrew Miller (1966), “Qoninči [Khoninchi], Compiler of the Hua-i i-yü [華夷譯語] of 1389,” *Ural-Altaische Jahrbücher* 38, 112-121.

⁵² Ancestor Ma Deluding had the given name Qin 欽 and, in addition, the courtesy name Yanming 彥明, his eldest son Ma Shayihei had the courtesy name Zhongde 仲德, and his son Ma Hama the courtesy name Zhongliang 仲良. (Only the *Nanjing Scroll* records the given name Qin. The courtesy names are identical in scroll and *Ma Genealogy*.)

policies are due to a very real and serious dilemma faced by early Ming rulers. Through the century of Mongol rule, society had become more complex: who was *Hua* ‘Chinese; civilised’ now and who was *Yi* ‘barbarian’? Who should be included, who excluded? And what role did language play in the project of sinicisation? The next and final section will investigate that question by looking at paratexts surrounding two early Ming translations: the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* as the first major translation project of the Ming, and the *Book on Heavenly Patterns* as the archetypal translation of a Mongol-legacy text.⁵³

3. Enlightening the barbarians or being enlightened by them?

The purported reason for creating the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* (1389) provides a third reason to speak of ‘sinicisation’ in the early Ming context. Without that glossary, explicates Liu Sanwu in his preface, linguistic barriers would prevent the success of the very project of sinicisation which I have analysed as an early Ming political strategy in the preceding section. Sinicisation, it will be recalled, was not imagined as an ethnic or national concept by early Ming rulers but as the civilising process as such: the development and enforcement of universal public standards of behaviour, often referred to as *li* and *yi*, that originated in court etiquette but transformed larger society, similar to the process described by the sociologist Norbert Elias (1897-1990) in his famous study.⁵⁴

Before the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* paratext can be analysed in detail, one peculiarity of this bilingual glossary—the first one created by the Ming—must be understood. This peculiarity is easily revealed by comparing this early Ming work to an older glossary, the Chinese-Tangut *Fan-Han heshi zhangzhongzhu* 番漢合時掌中珠 [*Foreign-Chinese (Word List): The Timely Pearl in the Palm*], compiled in 1190 by the Tangut Gulemaocai 骨勒茂才, when the Tangut empire ruled areas that belong today to China’s northwest. Two original prefaces are attached to the *Timely Pearl*, one in Chinese and one in Tangut language and script, with the Chinese version stating:

⁵³ For the larger significance of these sources, see also the introduction.

⁵⁴ Norbert Elias (2000 [1939]), *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* [*Über den Prozess der Zivilisation: Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen*], trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Eric Dunning et al. (Oxford: Blackwell).

How can [a Chinese person] associate with the multitude of foreigners without learning the foreign language? How can [a foreigner] understand Chinese (*Han*) feelings without knowing the Chinese language? If it happens that wise men amongst the foreigners are not respected by the Chinese and that talented persons of the Chinese are not honoured by foreigners, it is because they cannot communicate in each others' languages [不學番語，則豈和番人之眾。不會漢語，則豈入漢人之情。番有智者，漢人不敬，漢有賢士，番人不崇，若此者，由語言不通故也].⁵⁵

It is clear from this paragraph that the glossary is aimed at Chinese and non-Chinese alike (the latter politely called *fanren* 番人 'foreigners,' not *yi* 夷 'barbarians'). Consequently, it transcribes the pronunciation of Tangut words into Chinese and the pronunciation of Chinese words into Tangut script: it is *bidirectional*. The entry for 'sun' (Chin. 日), from the category *Heavenly Bodies* [天體], illustrates this bidirectionality. We see, from right to left, (1) the pronunciation of the Tangut word in Chinese transcription (*mo* 墨); (2) 'sun' written in Tangut; (3) 'sun' written in Chinese, *ri* 日; and (4) the pronunciation of the Chinese word in Tangut transcription:

Figure 16. 'Sun' entry in the bidirectional Tangut-Chinese glossary *Timely Pearl* (1190)⁵⁶

Thus, the *Timely Pearl* glossary can be used both by Tangut speakers to look up Chinese words and by Chinese speakers to look up Tangut words. In contrast, the Ming *Sino-Barbarian Translations* constitute a *unidirectional* glossary, which can only be used by those who read Chinese. It does not work the other way around: if one reads only Mongolian, the glossary is useless. Compare the entry for the same word, 'sun' from the category *Tianwen men* [*Heavenly Patterns*], where we see, from right to left, (1) 'sun' written in Mongolian; (2) 'sun' written in Chinese; and (3) the pronunciation of the Mongolian word (*naran*) in Chinese transcription (*nalan* 納蘭):

⁵⁵ Facsimile of the preface in Luc Kwanten (1982), *The Timely Pearl: A 12th Century Tangut-Chinese Glossary*, vol. I: *The Chinese Glosses* (Bloomington: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies), which includes a facsimile of the whole glossary. While Kwanten's study is labelled "vol. I," a second volume never appeared.

⁵⁶ Image from: Gulemaocai 骨勒茂才 (author) & Nie Hongyin 聂鸿音 et al. (editors) (1989 [1190]), *Fan-Han heshi zhangzhongzhu* 番漢合時掌中珠 (Ningxia: Ningxia renmin chubanshe).

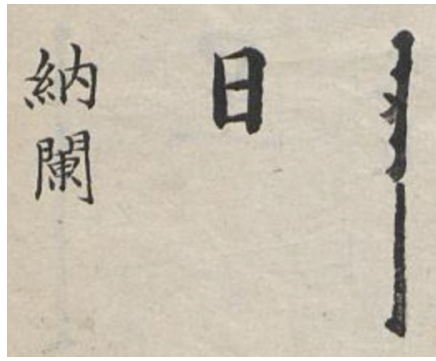


Figure 17. 'Sun' entry in the unidirectional *Sino-Barbarian Translations* (1389)⁵⁷

Why was the 1389 *yiyu* not created in a similar bidirectional form? To answer that question, we must pay attention to how this work addresses its readers. The Hanlin academician Liu Sanwu, in his preface, describes language as a kind of 'Great Wall of words,' marking the border between *Hua*, the realm of civilisation, and the barbarian Other (*Yi*). The fact that this "divide between *Hua* and *Yi*" [華夷之分] has a long history and could never be bridged is, in Liu's view, not due to any malicious intent but is a result of 'natural' linguistic differences. Linguistic barriers act like a dam preventing the flow of civilisation from reaching barbarian lands:

It was not that the sages did not feel the desire in their hearts to unite them [*Hua* and *Yi*]. [But] what could be done given that people spoke different languages? If people speak different languages, civilising influence (*jiaohua*) cannot be communicated. If civilising influence cannot be communicated, how can their [barbarian] customs be changed [聖人之心，非不欲一之也。奈何人言異。人言即異，則教化不能通。教化不能通，則其風俗何從而變]?

Hence, the need for language learning originates in a perceived civilising mission: "whoever wants to educate them, must first understand [their] languages" [教之者必始于通言語].⁵⁸ (This is, incidentally, exactly the same reason why the first Europeans decided to learn Chinese: to 'educate' and 'civilise' by spreading the gospel.) A similar point is made by Wang Zongzai in his *Inspection of the Bureau of Translators*, when he says that founding the *Bureau* was necessary because, to "inspire in [foreigners] feelings of sympathy or fear," one first had to learn to speak in their languages.⁵⁹ Therefore, the Ming, as the successors of the multilingual Yuan,

⁵⁷ Image from the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* in 'Hirth Ms. 1,' *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin*, vol. I, book 1, fol. 1r.

⁵⁸ Liu (1971 [1389]), *Preface to the Chinese-Barbarian Translations*, 1-2.

⁵⁹ Wang Zongzai, *Inspection* (1580), following Devéria's (1896) translation of Wang's preface in "Histoire du Collège des Interprètes," 98: "à leur inspirer des sentiments d'affection ou de crainte."

created the *Sino-Barbarian Translations*, “so that languages can be mutually understood and intentions and desires can be expressed” [以通言語，以達志意]. The concluding sentences of Liu’s preface strongly make the point that language learning is necessary in order to enforce sinicisation, or *jiaohua* 教化, literally ‘transformation through education,’ the civilising process:

When ritual, music, and civilising influence [spread] into all directions without being impeded, we embark upon that path on which Xia (China, civilisation) will change the barbarians. That is the purpose [of this glossary]. Indeed, it cannot be called a trifle [將見禮樂教化四達而不悖，則用夏變夷之道，端在是矣。豈曰小補之哉]!⁶⁰

It is clear from this passage—a preface to an imperially commissioned work—that, all assertions to the contrary notwithstanding, a *mission civilisatrice* was part of the early Ming world order.⁶¹ This mission, called *jiaohua*, aimed to civilise both barbarians and Ming subjects within the empire proper. For Ming subjects, *jiaohua* was to be achieved through community schools, as Sarah Schneewind has shown in a detailed study.⁶² For ‘barbarians,’ the same concept, *jiaohua*, was used, with the only difference that foreign languages had to be learned to enforce it. The importance of *jiaohua*, inside and outside the empire, was not necessarily due to early Ming rulers being caught in cultural illusions. Ming China was not a nation state and did not subscribe to a Westphalian concept of marked borders; neither did other contemporaneous polities.⁶³ The frontier (*bianjiang* 邊疆) and its inhabitants were understood in relatively fluid terms.⁶⁴ Borders were not fixed: rather, regions around the capital became increasingly less ‘Chinese.’ This fluidity can be illustrated through the apparent facility of cross-ethnic identity swaps that were discussed earlier, such as Chinese soldiers passing as Mongols to avoid paperwork, or Chinese, using their Tibetan language skills, to pass as Tibetan envoys. As a result of this fluidity, *jiaohua*

⁶⁰ Liu (1971 [1389]), *Preface to the Chinese-Barbarian Translations*, 5.

⁶¹ Shen (2007), “Accommodating Barbarians from Afar,” 44, states that generally “most of the time the Han elite had no ambition to ‘civilize surrounding barbarian peoples,’” including the early Ming, with which he is concerned.

⁶² Sarah Schneewind (2006), *Community Schools and the State in Ming China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press).

⁶³ A good introduction is Christopher Harding & C. L. Lim (1999), “The Significance of Westphalia: An Archaeology of the International Legal Order,” in *Renegotiating Westphalia: Essays and Commentary on the European and Conceptual Foundations of Modern International Law*, ed. Christopher Harding & C. L. Lim (The Hague: M. Nijhoff), 1-24.

⁶⁴ Allen Carlson (2012), “Reimagining the Frontier: Patterns of Sinicization and the Emergence of New Thinking about China’s Territorial Periphery,” in Katzenstein, *Sinicization and the Rise of China*, 41-64.

was crucial in order to define approximate borders of the empire in cultural terms. That Liu perceives the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* glossary as a means to enforce *jiaohua* proves that *jiaohua*, as transformation through education, was indeed a universal concept. It transcended inside/outside and native/foreign: ideally, everybody should ‘get *jiaohua*-ed.’

Returning to Liu’s preface, we should not be led into thinking that his ‘sinocentrism plus diversity awareness’ was the only way early Ming literati thought about language and translation. It is important to note this: if there is any flaw in Robinson’s groundbreaking volume on the Ming court, it is that the literati appear in an overly monolithic way—a perhaps unintended side effect of his effort to decentralise written records and pay more attention to material objects.⁶⁵ While Robinson rightly remarks that literati writings are biased, this is true for all sources. In particular, the multiple voices that arise from literati sources reveal that there is not one monolithic bias behind them. While Liu Sanwu, as shown above, constructs a borderline between *Hua* and *Yi* on the basis of language, the Hanlin official Wu Bozong, in his *Heavenly Patterns* preface, comes to a different conclusion. Wu compares Persian and Chinese works on astronomy and observes that “they took different paths but arrived at the same destination” [殊途同歸]. He even feels free to ask, “how is there any difference between those called *hua* (Chinese) and those called *yi* (Barbarians)” [豈以華夷而有間乎]? The Ming founder himself appears in Wu’s preface, praising Muslim astronomers, because “their observation and calculation of heavenly phenomena has reached exceptional precision” [推測天象至爲精密]. Not only that, he explicitly states that translation is important, because certain achievements of Islamic astronomy were “not yet contained in the books of the Middle Kingdom” [中國書之所未備], such as the “method for measuring [planetary] latitude” [驗其緯度之法].⁶⁶

Indeed, on a larger scale, the *Heavenly Patterns* translation project must be regarded as part of an age-old assimilation of foreign astronomical knowledge.⁶⁷ Indian astronomy had been translated around seven centuries earlier, when the Indian Buddhist Qutan Xita 瞿曇悉達 (Gautama Siddhārtha) served as Director of

⁶⁵ Robinson (2008), *Culture, Courtiers, and Competition*.

⁶⁶ Wu (1996 [1383]), *Preface to the Heavenly Patterns*, 2. See also my full translation in Appendix A.

⁶⁷ For “The Impact of Astronomy on Chinese Society in the Days before Telescopes,” see the homonymous article by Huang Yilong 黃一農 (2012), in *The Astronomy Revolution: 400 Years of Exploring the Cosmos*, ed. Donald G. York et al. (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press), 257-270.

Astrology in the Tang court from 711-719.⁶⁸ ‘Jesuit astronomy’ was translated two centuries after the period under investigation in this study. The contents of the translated treatises interested early Ming rulers because astronomy played a crucial role in justifying emperorship. The emperor ruled as ‘Son of Heaven’ (*Tianzi* 天子), the calendar legitimised his rule by allowing the computation of astronomical phenomena, and he depended on astronomers to choose auspicious dates for important undertakings. In the words of the *Heavenly Patterns* preface, “the emperor pays attention to the will of Heaven and fulfils its principles, hence establishing successful governance” [人君體天行道，乃成治功]. In particular, the Hongwu emperor of Wu’s preface intends to use astronomy to “take protective measures against calamities in due time, follow the will of Heaven, and cultivate the moral character of the populace” [思患預防，順天心，立民命焉], and sees in Islamic astronomy, as a matter of course, a means to achieve these aims.⁶⁹

As Wu’s text is the preface to an imperially commissioned translation, we can consider his account an expression of official policy. Wu certainly does not express xenophobia, not even much sinocentrism, but a very pragmatic approach and a decided interest in non-Chinese knowledge traditions. The *Heavenly Patterns* paratext is almost diametrically opposed to the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* approach: while the latter speaks throughout from a pulpit of cultural superiority (studying languages to enlighten the barbarians), the former candidly admits that this superiority does not exist: the barbarians possess wisdom which would be lost if language barriers were not overcome, through Chinese scholars learning barbarian languages.

⁶⁸ See Ōhashi Yukio (2008), “Indian Astronomy in China,” in *Encyclopaedia of the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures*, vol. I, ed. Helaine Selin (Dordrecht: Springer), 321-324. On Gautama Siddhārtha (not to be confused with the historical Buddha), see Cheung (2006), *Chinese Discourse on Translation* I, 170.

⁶⁹ These statements of the Ming founder, as he appears in Wu’s preface, are not always original ideas but references to the classics. For example, the formulation “follow the will of Heaven and cultivate the moral character of the populace” [順天心，立民命] is a variation on the dictum of the Neo-Confucian Zhang Zai 張載 (1020-1077) from his treatise *Zheng meng* 正蒙 [*Correcting Ignorance*]: “Finding the purpose of Heaven and Earth; cultivating the populace according to the law of Heaven; continuing the sciences of the sages of old; establishing peace for ten thousand generations” [爲天地立心，爲生民立命，爲往聖繼絕學，爲萬世開太平]. Quoted in Li Zehou 李澤厚 (1991), *Zhongguo sixiangshi lun* 中國思想史論 [*Chinese Intellectual History*] (Hefei: Anhui wenyi chubanshe), 260.

4. Conclusion

Given that some modern criticisms of sinicisation are conceptually unclear, this chapter elaborated that it is valid to speak of ‘sinicisation’ for the early Ming in three ways. Sinicisation occurred as ‘voluntary’ (partial) self-sinicisation of foreigners through pragmatic language choices. As I have shown, Mongol rulers improved their knowledge of the Chinese language through successive generations and many in the lower ranks followed their example. Moreover, sinicisation is not only a modern historiographical theory but was also a political strategy of the early Ming themselves. It was, however, overall not understood as ‘becoming Chinese’ in national or ethnic terms but as a ‘civilising process,’ *jiaohua*. While early Ming name policies—prescribing that foreigners keep their foreign surnames instead of adopting Chinese surnames—seem to run counter to the idea of sinicisation, I have argued that they make sense if we consider the Confucian concept of loyalty to clan and family and, in particular, principles of Yuan Confucianism: honouring the Chinese and non-Chinese ancestors *and* being loyal to the Yuan as a supra-ethnic civilisation. Prohibitions from speaking ‘barbarian languages’ (*huyu*) were occasionally seen as part of sinicisation. I have argued that such prohibitions, in all probability, did not target private use of non-Chinese languages but their use in court and other official contexts. Such languages served as markers of distinction for elites of the old regime, creating networks of power that could not be controlled easily by the Ming (such as Persian as a *lingua franca* in the *Islamic Astronomical Bureau*).

Finally, I have shown that language barriers could be perceived as obstacles in this very process of sinicisation, or *jiaohua*. The last point has been illustrated by consulting an early Ming glossary and it has become abundantly clear that the tone of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* (learning languages in order to ‘civilise the barbarians’) is very different from the tone of the *Timely Pearl* glossary of 1190 (learning languages for not-further-defined mutual exchange). From this early Ming glossary’s explicit elaboration of its own purpose, it is evident that it was exclusively aimed at Chinese officials who were, in theory, working with it from a position of cultural superiority. While Figure 16 is a leftover of a social situation in which two theoretically equal parties exchange linguistic knowledge, Figure 17 is evidence for a situation in which party A (early Ming administrators) acquires knowledge about party B (Mongols in general), while party B can only make sense of the process if they learn the symbol systems of party A (Chinese language and script). The early Ming decided against the bidirectional *Timely Pearl* approach because they did

indeed expect this glossary to be used only by readers of Chinese. They had this expectation because Chinese was just being reinstalled as *the* imperial language, as opposed to *one imperial language among others* in Mongol times. The Ming were aware of linguistic diversity, knew they were not alone in the world, and took steps to achieve multilingual competence. At the same time, they enforced the Chinese language and script (cosmopolitan literary Chinese) as the primary symbol and means of communication. However, rather than imposing monolingualism, it seems likely that they intended to enforce one form of standard Chinese (*guanhua*) as a *lingua franca*, without targeting the private use of non-Chinese languages within the empire.

CHAPTER FIVE

The place of foreign language study in early Ming society

Chapters One to Three have depicted the early Ming basically as cosmopolitan and in need of translation for various purposes. Chapter Four painted a differentiated picture by showing that nonetheless notions of sinicisation continued to play a role for early Ming rulers, despite cosmopolitanism. The cosmopolitan and multilingual aspects of the Ming also seem to run counter to prevalent scholarly depictions of the *Bureau of Translators* and translators in Chinese history in general as degraded to a low status. Thus, the final chapter of this thesis will tackle this contradiction by exploring the place of language study in the early Ming educational system, professional self-awareness and social status of translators, actual translation practices in their institutional environments, and the role of the Mongol legacy in all this.

1. The ‘profession’ of the translator in the early Ming

As elaborated earlier, no Chinese equivalent for ‘language’ or ‘translation’ appears in the actual Chinese names of the institutions that are customarily called the *Bureau of Translators* and the *Bureau of Interpreters*. Then how about their staff? Can they be seen as professional translators in the sociological sense? That is, did the Ming create translator-identities that were structured around the possession of abstract knowledge, acquired through formal education? As I will show, while early Ming rulers furthered professionalisation, as did the Mongols before them (see Chapter Two), much translation work was done unprofessionally by officials who just ‘happened’ to be bilingual. This is important, because such ‘unprofessionalism’ could only work because there *were* enough bilinguals in the early Ming, as a result of the Mongol legacy.

To begin with the professionals, one striking fact about Zheng He’s fleet is the definite rank and functions of its personnel. Apart from military posts, a source lists “sailmakers” [搭材], “anchor-blacksmiths” [鐵錨], “medical specialists” [醫師], and “translators” [通事].¹ Thus, instead of sailmakers or blacksmiths interpreting along the way because they happened to be bilingual, translators constituted an own crew group of specialists, defined by linguistic competence. Four individuals can be

¹ Dreyer (2006), *Zheng He*, 127-134.

named: Ma Huan, Guo Chongli 郭崇礼 (fl.1413-1433), Fei Xin, and Hasan 哈三 (Hasan) (fl. 1413-1415). All of them joined the fleet between its fourth and seventh expedition, all of them were proficient in Persian or Arabic or both, and most of them had a Muslim family background.² Ma was a Chinese Muslim from Zhejiang who, in his own words, “had the duty to translate foreign documents” [以通譯番書].³ Hasan had been imam of the Great Mosque in Xi’an. These specialists joined the fleet on its later expeditions, because only at this stage did it advance to ports as far as Hormuz and Aden and, consequently, knowledge of Persian and Arabic became significant.

What can we know about the background of these fleet translators? Two of them wrote about their experiences and while they did not discuss their translation work as such, they described the foreign countries they visited in great detail. Ma Huan wrote the *Overall Survey of the Ocean’s Shores* (1433) and Fei Xin the *Overall Survey of the Star Raft* (1436).⁴ These translators were highly literate—the classicisms in Ma Huan’s book indicate a good schooling—and made themselves a name that widely transcended their role as language mediators. There is no evidence that they had official titles or received any formal training in an institution such as the *Bureau of Translators*, and we ought not be surprised if future research would reveal many of them to be descendants of Muslim immigrants who had come to China in the Mongol era. On the other hand, at least Ma Huan apparently did not come from a Muslim family and acquired his language skills in China. Probably because he chose to convert to Islam as a young man, he began to study Arabic (at least as a *lingua sacra*) and possibly Persian (the *lingua franca* of Muslims in Yuan China) and the corresponding script, which eventually qualified him for a job on Zheng He’s ships.⁵ Perhaps one of the many Muslim merchants in Hangzhou served as a teacher. Ma Huan’s home town was just about twenty-four miles southeast of Hangzhou, one of the most important centres of navigation in early Ming China and one of the principal ports in which Arab and Persian merchants had settled since the Tang dynasty.

² For the language competence of these crew members, see Tan Ta Sen (2009), *Cheng Ho and Islam in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies), 171-172. On Hasan, see also Chang Kuei-sheng (1976), “Zheng He,” in Goodrich & Fang, *Dictionary of Ming Biography* II, 198.

³ Ma Huan (1937 [1433]), *Yingya shenglan*, 1.

⁴ Fei Xin 费信 (1954 [1436]), *Xingcha Shenglan* 星槎勝覽校注 [*The Annotated ‘Overall Survey of the Star Raft’*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju).

⁵ The little we know about Ma Huan is derived from his own preface and few additional paratexts surrounding his book. For details on Ma’s life, see Mills (1970), *Ying-yai sheng-lan*, 34-37. For the extant versions of Ma’s book, see Mills, *Overall Survey*, 37-41.

Other quasi-professional translators were being trained in the *Bureau of Translators*. The only challenge was to find students willing to do such work. In 1421, the year in which Zheng He's ships embarked from Nanjing towards Hormuz and the Swahili coast, it turned out that:

most students [of the *Imperial University*, or *Guozijian* 國子監] disliked [studying translation] and objected. This angered the emperor and he wanted to punish them. The *Hanlin* academician Yang Rong 楊榮 (1371-1440) saved them from punishment; thereupon he was ordered to attend to this matter. [Because] Yang Rong instructed and guided in an appropriate way, [students became] obedient and successful, some of them even acquired the official ranks five and six [諸生多不悅，輒生謗議。上怒，將罪之。學士楊榮救免，遂命掌其事。榮訓迪得宜，帖服有成，有官至五六品者].⁶

Clearly, disciplinary action had to be taken at times to persuade students to study translation. The story of a certain Qin Junchu 秦君初 (1385-1441) further illuminates the problem. Qin failed the capital (*jinshi*) examinations in 1412 and was reassigned to the *Bureau* to study Sanskrit. In 1415, he again took part in the capital examination and attached at the end of his examination paper a composition in some Indian script, possibly Lantsa. The work was judged to be satisfactory and Qin became a compiler in the Sanskrit department of the *Bureau*. Later, however, it was discovered that the 'Indian glossary' which Qin had produced was a fake and actually a recopying of a Buddhist text.⁷ That he got away with it is proof that language skills were not widespread; whoever judged Qin's work lacked the necessary knowledge. Similarly, while the court demanded that vacant posts in the *Bureau of Interpreters* be filled as quickly as possible, officials often found it hard to do so.⁸

If the oft-repeated assertion in scholarship about interpreters and translators having a "low status"⁹ is true, it would certainly explain why students were not too motivated. We can estimate their status by examining recruitment and career patterns within the *Bureau of Translators*. Careers depended on triennial exams which mirrored the imperial examinations proper.¹⁰ Those who passed the first exam, rose to

⁶ Lü (1630), *Regulations*, *juan* 1, "Establishment" [建設].

⁷ On Qin Junchu, see Pelliot (1948), "Sseu-yi-kouan," 237-238. See also Carla Nappi (2015), "Full. Empty. Stop. Go. Translating Miscellany in Early Modern China," in *Early Modern Cultures of Translation*, ed. Karen Newman & Jane Tylus (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), 211.

⁸ *Collected Statutes of the Great Ming*, *juan* 109, 1628.

⁹ Morris Rossabi (2014), "Ming Officials and Northwestern China," in Morris Rossabi, *From Yuan to Modern China and Mongolia* (Leiden: Brill), 93. Several similar statements could be quoted.

¹⁰ Lü (1630), *Regulations*, "Two imperial edicts" [勅諭二道], Edict II (1490), 21 (8).

the status of “Food-and-Grain-Students” [食糧子弟]¹¹ and were given one *dan* 石 of rice a month. After another three years of study, a second examination would be held and those who scored “first rank” [優等] received “cap and belt” [冠帶], meaning that they became proper officials, or more precisely “Script-Translator-Officials” [譯字官]. Those who scored first rank again were given either a not further defined translation-related post (rank 8b) or became “Ushers” [序班] at the *Honglusi* 鴻臚寺, or *Court of State Ceremonial* (rank 9b). The *Court*, attached to the *Ministry of Rites*, supervised all ritual aspects of state functions, which included the reception of foreign dignitaries.¹² Significantly, a student could spend a long time in the *Bureau* before finally slipping through the net, as the regulations state explicitly that *only* “those who [over a period of nine years] fail three successive exams are being dismissed and considered common people (*min*) [三試不中者黜退爲民].¹³ This meant that they were thrown back onto a status without any titles, official rank, or salary, and without the welcome exemption from corvée labour and taxes official titles entailed.¹⁴ While it is difficult to decide whether we should infer from this that the *Bureau* made every effort to train competent translators or rather that completely untalented students could loiter around for nine long years before they would finally be sent away, one thing is clear: at first glance, ranks of the type 8b and 9b indeed seem like a small reward for many years of effort put in foreign language study.¹⁵

Yet a post at the *Bureau of Translators* was certainly desirable. First, it would provide a roof over one’s head, clothes, possibilities of promotion, and a salary paid in silver, firewood, silk, salt, meat, wine, and rice.¹⁶ Keep in mind that in the dry north rice was a luxury to all but the wealthy. Second, the *Bureau* was a subordinate organ of the prestigious *Hanlin Academy*, even if it was less prestigious itself and

¹¹ This term refers to the form of their salary, being paid out not in cash but in natural produce.

¹² Ushers had to deal with foreigners, so language competence must have been beneficial. See Hucker (1985), *Dictionary of Official Titles*, 73, 86-87, esp. 264. Lung shows that in Tang times, ten percent of the *Court of State Ceremonial* staff were interpreters: a huge percentage, evidencing their significance. See Lung (2008), “Translation Officials of the Tang Central Government in Medieval China,” *Interpreting* 10, 175-196.

¹³ Lü (1630), *Regulations*, “Two imperial edicts” [勅諭二道], Edict II (1490), 21 (8).

¹⁴ Exemption from taxes and corvée labor, which *min* (common people) were expected to perform, explains why most people wanted to become at least a *shengyuan* 生員, that is, a student who had passed the district examinations (*tongshi* 童試). The *shengyuan* title was not only the first step to pursue official positions through the imperial examinations but also connected to the prestigious gentry status. *Shengyuan* enjoyed economic and political privileges in their communities and dressed different from commoners. See Rui Wang (2013), *The Chinese Imperial Examination System: An Annotated Bibliography* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press), 7.

¹⁵ The traditional system consisted of nine ranks from 1 to 9, each divided into two classes (*deng* 等), upper ‘a’ (*zheng* 正) and lower ‘b’ (*cong* 從). See Hucker (1985), *Dictionary of Official Titles*, 4-5.

¹⁶ Wild (1945), “Materials,” 632-634.

originally not even located in the vicinity of the *Academy* but at Beijing's Dong'an Gate 東安石門, outside the city wall.¹⁷ Later it moved closer to the centre of power and stood directly outside the eastern entry into Beijing's Forbidden City, a stone's throw away from the *Hanlin Academy*. Before Chinese envoys were sent to foreign polities, they could 'order' a *Bureau* translator via the *Academy*. Enforcement of discipline was also a duty of *Hanlin* officials who would take action against *Bureau* students who "do not at all diligently study" [全不用心習學], "oppose their teachers" [抗拒師長], or were "ignorant and stubborn" [愚頑], as an edict of 1444 clarifies.¹⁸ The fact that "high *Hanlin* officials" [翰林院堂上官] were responsible to "examine the educational work" [考校務] of the *Bureau* and enforce an educational standard, further suggests that its status was not that low after all. At least, edicts such as the above-quoted show the intention of early Ming rulers to build up efficient institutions of language mediation, connected to the higher echelons of learning and scholarship.

Even more important, a *Bureau* post would open up possibilities to participate in trade. For the *Bureau of Interpreters*, the link between translation and private trade has been highlighted by Chapter Three. It seems that for *Bureau of Translators* staff similar opportunities existed. As shown above, one career goal for students was the *Court of State Ceremonial* where they would inevitably come into contact with tributary-trade embassies. Sources related to both Ming translation bureaus express concern about 'wild' trade and the leaking of classified information. A Tianshun era (1457-1464) memorial criticises that lately "the sons of government officials, military households, artisans, and kitchen servants" [官員、軍民、匠作、廚役子弟] study translation in a *si* 私 way (privately and illegally), rush into the *Bureau*, and ask to be employed there.¹⁹ The court feared that commoners might access the tribute system through language study. Indeed, in 1453, people of the frontier regions (*bianmin* 邊民), understanding the profits to be gained from tributary trade, "let their children learn [foreign] languages, so that they could work as interpreters for foreign monks; they mix with them to offer tribute" [將子孫學其言語，投作番僧通事，混同進

¹⁷ As already hinted at in Chapter Two, the sources do not reveal where the *Bureau* was first built in 1407. As argued earlier, it seems likely that it was first built in Nanjing and then moved to Beijing as part of the relocation of the capital (see also Pelliot [1948], "Sseu-yi-kouan," 243-249). The fact that, according to the *Regulations*, 38 individuals to study translation were drawn from the *Directorate of Education* (*Guozijian* 國子監) in 1407 does not help much either, as there was always an *Imperial Academy* in every capital of a Chinese dynasty. The Ming had two capitals, Nanjing and Beijing, and consequently two *Imperial Academies*. Thus, there were possibly also two *Bureaus of Translators*.

¹⁸ Lü (1630), *Regulations*, "Two imperial edicts," Edict I (1444), 18 (7).

¹⁹ Again, both basic meanings of *si*, 'privately' and 'illegally,' apply here, just as in the *Bureau of Interpreters* sources related to trade, which I discussed in Chapter Three.

貢], thus passing for envoys themselves.²⁰ Private language study is perceived as a real danger in the Tianshun memorial:

Many documents written in foreign scripts pertain to matters concerning border areas. Since there is no order in teaching and studying anymore, it is hardly avoidable that ‘barbarian affairs’ [foreign policy matters to be kept secret] are being divulged [番字文書，多關邊務，教習既濫，不免透漏彝情].²¹

Hence, instructors who privately tutored “the offspring from random households” [各家子弟] should be heavily punished. We can infer from later incidents, however, that good students gained ‘illegally’ were kept. In 1466, the *Bureau of Translators* had 154 students, yet the language instructor Ma Ming 馬銘 took an extra 136 students and privately/illegally (*si*) “taught them foreign scripts” [教習番書]. Significantly, while Ma was impeached, the imperial administration ordered the Ministry of Rites “to examine [‘illegal’ students] and to keep some of those who have a good command [of foreign languages]” [考選精通者量留餘].²² Clearly, officials followed the logic of the situation rather than rules banning private language study. It has also become clear that such study was considered ‘arcane,’ located in a controlled environment of imperial officials, similarly to the Ming prohibition to privately practise astronomy, the science of the heavens, and thus belonging properly to the Son of Heaven.²³ Consequently, not everybody could join the special forces of language mediators.

There are further reasons to doubt the allegedly ‘low status’ of translators. First, the ranks 5 and 6 that were obtained by some *Bureau of Translator* students are not low—although it is unclear if students achieved them within the *Bureau* proper or used it as a stepping stone to higher posts.²⁴ Second, even if ranks were ‘low’ (such as 8b and 9b), they made translators part of the imperial world, in contrast to *min*, or commoners, who constituted the majority of the population. Moreover, only a certain part of the imperial staff had rank status (*guan* 官).²⁵ It is not self-evident that the court decided to grant talented translators rank status at all. Third, consider that both the *Ma Genealogy* and the *Nanjing Scroll* claim that Ma Shaiyihei was employed not only at the *Astronomical Bureau* and in the *Hanlin Academy*, but also held a post as

²⁰ *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Zhengtong, *juan* 232, 5079-5080.

²¹ Lü (1630), *Regulations*, *juan* 1: “Establishment,” 75 (44).

²² *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Chenghua, *juan* 39, 789.

²³ Jiang (2011), *Great Ming Code*, 76-77.

²⁴ Those ranks are mentioned by the *Regulations* for the year 1421, quoted above.

²⁵ Hucker (1985), *Dictionary of Official Titles*, 5.

language instructor at the *Bureau of Translators*.²⁶ Since it is well-established that genealogies often omitted facts that ran counter to the glorified image they intended to project, we may ask: why would they mention *Bureau of Translators* posts at all if they were nothing to be proud of? Fourth, the Ming court actively sought for persons with linguistic talent and paid some of them generously. When an edict “ordered to seek people who understood foreign scripts” [詔求通彝字者], the Grand Secretary Li Xian 李賢 (1408-1466) presented the minister of the imperial stud, Han Ding 韓定 (1417-1485), who gave “an explanation of foreign speech and translated writing” [彝音譯字之說]. As a reward, the emperor showered him in “jewels, paper money, brocade, and damask” [寶鈔錦綺] and allowed his family to settle in the capital.²⁷

With all that in mind, the following remark about the newly established *Bureau of Translators*, made in a Yongle edict of 1407, is most significant:

Whenever the imperial examinations will be held, [translation students] will be ordered to participate. They will add translations of the texts they write [in the examination context]. Those who fulfil the criteria will pass [遇開科令就試，仍譯所作文字，合格准出身].²⁸

This is confirmed and elaborated by the mid-Ming leading scholar Qiu Jun who notes that “at first, successful candidates in the imperial provincial examination were chosen to do this [translation work]” [初以舉人為之] at the *Bureau*, and:

whenever they took part in the exams [supervised by the] Ministry of Rites, they would translate the [examination] texts, which they had written, into foreign scripts. Those who [also] reasonably understood the explanations of the classics, would have their names added as an extra category to the public list of successful candidates in the highest imperial civil service examination. They would be appointed to a scholarly-official post and translate texts as before [其就禮部試，則以蕃書譯其所作，經義稍通者，得聯名於進士榜，授以文學之職而譯書如故].²⁹

²⁶ The *Nanjing Scroll* states that Hongwu “conferred the title of Astronomical Bureau Director upon him [Ma Shayihei] and appointed him to a post at the *Bureau of Translators*” [封欽天監監正，任四譯館]. The assertion as such is plausible: the early *Bureau* was mainly staffed by non-Chinese, as Chapter One has shown. Ma Shayihei with his multilingual competence would have been an eligible candidate. However, the *Bureau* was not yet founded under Hongwu. The source either uses legendary material, or is confused about the historical dates, or it might be pointing to a precursor of the *Bureau*.

²⁷ Lü (1630), *Regulations*, *juan* 1: “Establishment.”

²⁸ Yongle edict issued on 26 April 1407, in the *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Yongle, *juan* 65, 920. Two ambiguities of this source must be pointed out. First, is it referring to the supra-provincial tier only (i.e., metropolitan plus palace examinations) or also to the provincial or even the local tier? Second, what about the spatial dimension? Did translation students enter the examination compound and were they identifiable as a specific group apart from regular candidates?

²⁹ Qiu (1999 [1487]), *Daxue yanyi bu*, *juan* 145, 1262-1263. On Qiu Jun, see also the introduction.

One interpretation of the sources is that *Bureau* students embarked on a double career path. In addition to their *Bureau* work, they engaged in regular classical studies and participated in the empire-wide examinations to climb the traditional “ladder of success.”³⁰ Similarly, one could conclude that translation candidates were on a single career track—the usual one of the examination system, leading to official posts—and translational skills improved their *per se* low chances of achieving ultimate success. Translators were then not focused on embarking on a translator’s career but taking advantage of a special option (bringing translational skills into play) to make a traditional career. In my view, a slightly different reading is even more convincing: there *were* professional career paths in translation and they were linked to the larger Ming education system in the form of the examinations, because a certain level of education—including knowledge of the classics—would simply be expected from translators as from any other civil and military government official.

Regardless of these intricacies of career development, the two above sources suggest that translation work was taken seriously. If proficiency in foreign languages could count towards obtaining the highest possible degree in the examination system, the assertion that translation work had a ‘low status’ seems overly general. In particular, translation came into play within the imperial examinations earlier than commonly assumed. In Elman’s comprehensive study, translation in the examination context appears only in the Qing timeframe, never in the Ming.³¹ Gong Duqing 龔篤清, specialist for Ming-era examinations, says nothing about translation candidates either.³² This omission is best explained by the fact that the Qing is *a priori* seen as a multilingual foreign dynasty, while the Ming is considered monolingual and native. However, this distinction has become increasingly questionable. While Chapters Two and Three have clarified that not only the Yuan and Qing but also the Ming created multilingual edicts and steles to project an image of universal rulership, we have now seen that translation in the imperial examinations played a role not only in the multilingual Qing but already, to some extent, in the Ming. While the Ming did not try to actually make translation a formal part of the imperial examinations (as the Qing did), the evidence still suggests that it adopted on-and-off measures to gain skilled translators.

³⁰ He Bingdi 何炳棣 [Ping-ti Ho] (1964), *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China: Aspects of Social Mobility, 1368-1911* (New York: John Wiley & Sons).

³¹ Elman (2000), *Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, 167, 223, 548.

³² Gong Duqing 龔篤清 (2007), *Mingdai keju tujian 明代科舉圖鑑 [Illustrated Handbook of Imperial Examinations in the Ming Dynasty]* (Changsha: Yuelu shushe).

2. The translators' workshop: competence and collaboration

As we have seen, some translators worked in quasi-professional settings, such as the *Bureau of Translators*, the *Bureau of Interpreters*, and the 'Zheng He milieu,' all of them related to diplomacy and trade. In other settings, especially when literary works were translated, many translators were not in any sense professionals but regular officials who just 'happened' to be bilingual: a pattern that could only work because, as a legacy of the Mongol era, there *were* enough bilinguals in the early Ming. We should ask at this juncture: what, actually, is linguistic competence? And what role did it play in the early Ming translation contexts?

While it is tempting to equate linguistic competence in translation projects with individual multilingualism, some people called 'translators' in the sources were monolingual. However, that does not imply a lack of linguistic competence. A scholar who translated oral explanations—delivered by a Persian speaker in some form of Chinese vernacular—into a text that conformed to the expected standards of the Chinese literary tradition, contributed essential linguistic competence. Furthermore, 'monolingual' should be handled with care when describing Chinese scholars who came usually with a particular type of *triglossia*: they would *speak*, first, their local dialect, used only in particular spaces of the empire; second, *guanhua*, the theoretically empire-wide standard dialect; and third, they would *write* in cosmopolitan literary Chinese, different from all vernaculars, that was mastered not just by Chinese but also by Koreans, Vietnamese, and Japanese, as earlier chapters have shown. This kind of triglossia was the norm among examined officials.

Quite naturally though, some individuals in translation projects had to be multilingual in the stricter sense of the word. I have introduced many of them in Chapter One, but we have not yet seen how they worked together. As will be shown, a constellation of 'monolingual Chinese' and multilingual 'foreign' officials from Yuan times led to a characteristic division of labour. The *Heavenly Patterns* will serve as a case study, because it is the archetypal early Ming translation case of a non-Chinese text that was literally left behind by the Mongol ruling class when they fled Khanbaliq (Beijing). Its most important paratext was written by the *Hanlin* official Wu Bozong and is the only source commenting on the translation process in detail—and the only source written by a person personally involved in it.³³ Wu, in his capacity as "Grand Academician" [大學士] since 1382, is the nexus between the

³³ The second preface of the translator Ma Hama does not talk about the translation process as such.

centre of imperial power (as his post involved such delicate matters as tutoring the Heir Apparent) and the bilingual translators of non-Chinese descent.

In official historiography, the *Book on Heavenly Patterns* translation is often attributed only to ‘Chinese’ *Hanlin Academy* officials and the Western Regions translators are not named. The *Ming History*, for instance, proudly remembers that

in the ninth month of the fifteenth year (of Hongwu, i.e. October 1382), [the emperor] ordered the *Hanlin* officials Li Chong and Wu Bozong to translate books on Islamic calendrical science [十五年九月，詔翰林李翀、吳伯宗譯回回曆書].³⁴

This statement implies that Li and Wu did the principal translation work. Wu himself, however, paints a different picture. He recalls how Hongwu’s armies once conquered Khanbaliq and “captured its land charts and census registers, its classics and commentaries, and its works of ancient philosophers and historical records” [收其圖籍經傳子史], which were all transferred into the imperial library of the new capital Nanjing.³⁵ Imperial libraries had always been symbols of power through knowledge concentrated at the seat of the universal ruler.³⁶ But what if said ruler could not understand the books in his library? When the Ming founder summoned his officials to “explain and comment” [進講] on the Yuan writings, it soon became clear that they contained a considerable amount of undecipherable “Western Regions books” [西域書], full of “peculiar language” [言殊] and “foreign characters” [字異].

From Wu’s statement that, at first, it seemed that “there was no one able to understand them [i.e. non-Chinese treatises]” [無能知者], we can infer that foreign language skills were rather uncommon amongst early Ming scholars. In this regard, Ming China was different from other empires, such as the Ottoman one. It was not a status symbol for a Chinese scholar to be multilingual but it was for an Ottoman one who would—in an ideal world—exhibit competence, first, in the highly Persianised and Arabised Turkish which served as the administrative language, second in Arabic as the language of science, religion and legal texts, and third in Persian as a literary prestige language.³⁷ By the same token, the Ming was different from Renaissance

³⁴ *Ming History*, juan 31, 517.

³⁵ Wu Bozong, *Preface to the Book on Heavenly Patterns*, 2.

³⁶ See, for example, Roy MacLeod (ed.) (2004), *The Library of Alexandria: Centre of Learning in the Ancient World* (London: I.B. Tauris).

³⁷ Assessment of Ottoman multilingualism: personal comment Colin Imber, November 2014. This is mainly valid for the late fifteenth century; earlier, Persian and Greek would have been used.

Europe where translation had become increasingly important, first due to linguistic fragmentation, and second because humanists called for a return to the sources, written in various languages. This explains the high level of multilingualism of some Jesuits who arrived in China a century or two after our period of investigation. Johannes Schreck (1576-1630), for instance, was a native speaker of some form of German, studied Latin (as a cosmopolitan literacy), Hebrew and Greek (languages of the major text of tradition, the Bible), learned to communicate in Italian, Portuguese, French, and English (important European vernaculars), and eventually studied Old Syriac (a further significant language of Christian tradition).³⁸ It is important to make this point in order to paint a differentiated picture and—in spite of all criticisms of past scholarship—to avoid exchanging the topos of the ‘expulsion of the Mongols’ against another unhelpful generalisation of the Ming as ‘open to everybody and highly multilingual.’ It is at least debatable whether linguistic spheres interacted in the same intense way as they did in the Ottoman empire or in Renaissance Europe. While many loanwords exist in Ming Chinese, such as *shizi* 獅子 ‘lion’ from Persian *shīr*, or *pingguo* 蘋果 ‘apple’ from Sanskrit *bimbā*, there is nothing like a new hybrid language as Ottoman Turkish, in which Arabic and Persian borrowings became so overwhelming towards the late fifteenth century that in many texts almost no originally Turkish vocabulary can be found.³⁹

While in Europe there had long been an awareness of the ‘foreignness’ of classical texts and a desire to hear the voices of the past in their natural registers, the same cannot be said for China, where the language of the oldest classics and the speech of the Ming could basically be perceived as the same language. This is one likely explanation for the fact that in the early Ming knowledge of foreign languages was, on the whole, not common amongst scholar-officials. Thus, Wu Bozong readily admits that he and his colleague Li Chong were dependent on the help of translators with Western Regions background to deal with the writings inherited from the Yuan. Only they knew what these texts actually contained, namely the achievements of “astronomers who had recently come from the Western Regions” [邇來西域陰陽家]. Wu’s paraphrase of the instructions given to translators is illuminating:

³⁸ Erich Zettl (2015), *Johannes Schreck-Terrentius: Wissenschaftler und China-Missionar, 1576-1630* (Konstanz: Franz Steiner), 39.

³⁹ That Asian languages borrowed Chinese vocabulary is much better known than borrowings the other way around, another manifestation of the *one-way* cultural change paradigm criticised in Chapter Four. For a case study, see André G. Haudricourt & David Strecker (1991), “Hmong-Mien (Miao-Yao) Loans in Chinese,” *T’oung Pao* 77, 335-341. On the hybridity of Ottoman Turkish, see M. Buğday Korkut (2009 [1999]), *The Routledge Introduction to Literary Ottoman* [*Osmanisch-Lehrbuch, Einführung in die Grundlagen der Literatursprache*], trans. Jerold C. Frakes (London: Routledge), xv.

People from the Western Regions, you are familiar with your own language and you understand Chinese as well, [therefore] you will instruct the Confucian scholars orally. Confucian scholars, you will translate the meanings and join them together into a text. Narrate nothing but the truth, refrain from literary embellishments, but do not omit [anything either] [爾西域人，素習本音，兼通華語，其口以授儒，爾儒譯其義，輯成文焉。惟真述，毋藻繪，毋忽]。⁴⁰

Here, Wu reveals the *Heavenly Patterns* translation as a collaboration of people with different backgrounds and competences. Four bilinguals he refers to by name: Ma Shayihei, his brother Ma Hama (Muḥammad), Ḥaydar, and Adawuding (possibly Alau-din).⁴¹ While the Chinese scholars, whose task—in modern terminology—was to record and revise the oral interpretation, are being characterised as the ones who did the “translating” [譯], it is evident from Wu’s description that only the Westerners Ma Shayihei et al. could handle these texts. They examined the books and “chose those that were discussing astronomy, yin-yang-studies and calendar science” [擇其言天文陰陽曆象者], in short: imperial knowledge. They translated the contents orally from Persian into a Chinese vernacular, whereupon ‘Confucians’ translated further into cosmopolitan literary Chinese. Choosing a collaborative approach ensured the highest possible accuracy of the translation by maximisation of competences, i.e., comprehension of the original Persian texts on the side of the Western Regions actors plus mastery of Chinese vocabulary and style on the side of the Chinese participants.

Apart from the fact that these instructions establish fidelity to the original as an ideal, it is, in particular, the overlaps between oral and written spheres that is intriguing. As James St. André has shown, there is an assumption, based on European experience, that translation is a solitary act.⁴² Translation as a collaboration of people with different competences has, however, a long tradition in China, especially in the complex process of Buddhist scripture transmission. Individual translators were the exception and collaboration, institutionalised in ‘translation forums’ (*yichang* 譯場), the norm: a non-Chinese monk would explain the meaning of the original text orally in some Indian or Central Eurasian vernacular and his words would be interpreted

⁴⁰ Wu (1996 [1383]), *Preface to the Heavenly Patterns*, 2.

⁴¹ See Chapter One for a study of their backgrounds.

⁴² James G. St. André (2010), “Lessons from Chinese History: Translation as a Collaborative and Multi-Stage Process,” *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction* 23, 71-94. In fact, there are examples from European history, too. A student of Gerard of Cremona (1114-1187) of the ‘Toledo School’ of translators in twelfth century Spain informs us that the original Arabic text was first orally translated into Spanish vernacular by a certain Ghalib, whereupon Gerard translated into literary Latin. See Richard Fletcher (2005), *Ein Elefant für Karl den Großen: Christen und Muslime im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft), 128-129.

into Chinese.⁴³ The late Ming saw the same division of labour. Jesuits interpreted Latin scientific treatises into Chinese vernacular and Ming scholars brought them into literary form. Even terminologies are similar: *koushou* 口授 means ‘oral translation’ for Buddhists, early Ming translators, and late Ming Jesuits.⁴⁴ In the Qing, the same technique prevailed in the work of Lin Shu 林紓 (1852-1924), who translated over 150 European books without knowing any foreign languages: “I trust myself to two or three gentlemen who orally re-narrate the texts for me. (...) As soon as their voice stops, my pen rests as well” [特二三君子，為余口述其詞 (...)。聲已筆止].⁴⁵ The early Ming scholars Wu Bozong and Li Chong, identified as the ‘translators’ by the *Ming History*, could have made exactly the same statement, word for word.

A similar case are the *Sino-Barbarian Translations*. Here as well the pivotal translators were native speakers of the language translated. Both projects are further linked through the person of Ma Shanyihei who, as Chapter One has shown, united in his person all *linguae francae* of the Yuan, Chinese, Mongolian, and Persian. As argued above, the *Heavenly Patterns* are an archetypal early Ming translation of a text inherited from the retreating Mongol ruling class. The *Sino-Barbarian Translations* are a case of Mongol legacy for slightly different reasons. At the same time they are a true Ming innovation, as will be shown in the next and final section.

3. The *Huayi yiyu* glossary as a case study of Mongol legacies

When the Mongols surrendered the global player arena in the course of the fourteenth century, they bequeathed to Eurasia a heightened interest in foreign languages and scripts, which had developed as one side effect of their multilingual empire. The many bi- and multilingual glossaries produced under Mongol patronage or under the impression of their conquests are evidence of this, the earliest one contained in Kirakos of Gandzak’s (ca. 1200-1271) Armenian chronicle.⁴⁶ The ‘Rasulid Hexaglot,’

⁴³ Ma Zuyi 馬祖毅 (2006), *Zhongguo fanyi tongshi* 中國翻譯通史 [A History of Translation in China], vol. I: *Gudai bufen* 古代部分 [Premodern China] (Wuhan: Hubei jiaoyu chubanshe), 65-137. For an example of the complex instructions given to translators, see Tansen Sen (2002), “The Revival and Failure of Buddhist Translations during the Song Dynasty,” *T’oung Pao* 88 (2002), 34-35.

⁴⁴ I analysed late Ming collaborative approaches in Lotze (2012), *Übersetzen und Dolmetschen*, 68-78.

⁴⁵ Lin Shu (1914), “Xu 序” [Preface], in: Lin Shu 林紓, *Xiaonü nai’er zhuan* 孝女耐兒傳 [Biography of the Filial Daughter and the Patient Son (= translation of Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, 1840)] (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan). See also Michael Hill (2013), *Lin Shu, Inc.: Translation and the Making of Modern Chinese Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

⁴⁶ Louis Ligeti (1965). “Le lexique mongol de Kirakos de Gandzak,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 18, 241-297.

created in the 1360s to 1370s in Yemen—where Zheng He’s fleet would anchor half a century later—, lists words in Mongolian, Persian, Arabic, Turkic, Armenian, and Greek.⁴⁷ In the eastern Islamic world, several multilingual glossaries appeared in the fourteenth century, such as the tetraglot of Ibn Muhanna.⁴⁸ A certain Badr al-Dīn of North India produced the *Farhang-i Zafan-guya va Jahan-puya*, including Persian, Arabic, Turkic, ‘Nabatean’ (Aramaic), and ‘Rumi’ (a catch-all category of similar scope as the Chinese *huihui*, referring to Greek, Latin, and Syriac).⁴⁹ More glossaries were produced by the Mamluks of Egypt, the Ottomans, and the Latin West.

Early Ming glossaries, such as the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* of 1389, must be understood against this backdrop: as achievements created in the direct aftermath and aftershock of the Mongol conquest of China. If we understand glossary compilation as a cultural activity stimulated by social, economic, and individual demands in a specific historical situation, how then can this achievement of early Ming translators be characterised? To answer that question, three dimensions of this *yi-yu* will be analysed: the *yi-yu* format, the level of its linguistic sophistication, and finally its purposes. From the lexicon (the actual entries of Mongolian vocabulary and also *how* they are translated into Chinese), we will be able to draw conclusions about the purpose of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* as well as about its compilers.

Let us first look at the format of this glossary. The *Regulations for the Bureau of Translators* record that in the first month of the fifteenth year of Hongwu (January/February 1382), the Ming founder:

“instructed the Hanlin officials Huo Yuanjie [Khoninchi], Expositor-in-waiting, Ma Yichihei [i.e. Ma Shayihei], Junior Compiler, and others, to translate their [Mongolian] language into Chinese. Of all [categories, such as] heavenly patterns, features of the earth, human affairs, kinds of things, clothes and food, tools and utensils, there is none that would not be contained in the glossary. (...) [The work] was called *Sino-Barbarian Translations and Transcriptions*. (...) Since that time, envoys who pass through the desert are all able to convey their intentions [令翰林院侍講火原潔與編修馬懿赤黑等以華言譯其語。凡天文、地理、人事、物類、服食、器用、靡不具載復。(...) 名華彝譯語。(...) 自是使臣往來朔漠皆能得其情].⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Peter Golden, Tibor Halasi-Kun et al. (eds.) (2000), *The King’s Dictionary: The Rasūlid Hexaglot: Fourteenth Century Vocabularies in Arabic, Persian, Turkic, Greek, Armenian, and Mongol* (Leiden).

⁴⁸ Including Mongolian, Persian, Arabic, and Turkic. See Louis Ligeti (1962), “Un vocabulaire mongol d’Istanbul,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 14, 3-99.

⁴⁹ For the Turkic material, see Robert Dankoff (1987), *The Turkic Vocabulary in the Farhang-i Zafān-gūyā (8th/14th century)* (Bloomington: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies).

⁵⁰ Lū (1630), *Regulations*, *juan* 1, “Establishment” [建設].

This sounds like a great novelty. However, even the *yiyu* format itself is a Yuan invention and, thus, an important and largely overlooked case of Mongol legacy. The first *yiyu*, the *Menggu yiyu* 蒙古譯語 [*Mongolian Translations and Transcriptions*], was created in the early Yuan to “avoid the pain of [uttering] difficult-to-understand [words like someone with] a fish bone stuck in the throat” [無缺舌鯁喉之患].⁵¹ The Ming took over, in principle, the format as it had been developed by Mongol-era scholars, and the Yuan prototype even continued to be printed.⁵² Foreign terms were translated and sorted according to Chinese epistemic paradigms into *men* 門 (topical categories): beginning ‘above’ with the greatest and holiest (*Tianwen*, or ‘Heavenly Patterns’), one would move ‘downwards’ to more profane and smaller things.

The early Ming, however, made important changes and improvements to the inherited prototype. The most significant change concerns linguistic amplitude. While the Yuan had created only this one glossary for the language pair Chinese-Mongolian, the Ming took the endeavour to a new level and produced, in the *Bureau of Translators* and the *Bureau of Interpreters*, *yiyu*-glossaries for language pairs such as Persian-Chinese, Tibetan-Chinese, Uyghur-Chinese, and many more.⁵³ A further change concerns scope, as Ming *yiyu* are approximately twice as large as the Yuan original.⁵⁴ The last change regards structure: while in the *Mongolian Translations*, the *men*-classification principle led to 22 categories, the Ming systematised further and arrived at a standard pattern of 17 categories by either combining categories or getting rid of categories that were maybe considered to be permeated too strongly with the “barbarian mischiefs’ mutton stench” [驅胡虜之羶腥], such as ‘Saddles and Horses’ [鞍馬].⁵⁵ The resulting structure of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* is:

⁵¹ *Yiyu* preface quoted after Igor de Rachewiltz (2006), “Some Remarks on the *Chih-Yüan I-Yü* 至元譯語 [i.e., *Translations and Transcriptions of the Zhiyuan Period*] alias *Meng-Ku I-Yü* 蒙古譯語, the First Known Sino-Mongol Glossary,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 59, 15. The vocabulary has been studied by Louis Ligeti & György Kara (1990) in “Un vocabulaire sino-mongol des Yuan: Le *Tche-yuan yi-yu* [至元譯語],” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 44, 259-277, which has a facsimile of a Japanese edition of the *Mongolian Translations*.

⁵² Rachewiltz (2006), “Some Remarks,” 16-18, for the Ming editions of the *Mongolian Translations*.

⁵³ See my discussion of languages studied at the *Bureau of Translators* in Chapter Two.

⁵⁴ The *Mongolian Translations* contain 541 Chinese lemmata plus Mongol equivalents in Chinese transcription. The *Sino-Barbarian Translations* contain 845 lemmata. Later Ming glossaries (*yiyu*) usually contain around 1000 lemmata.

⁵⁵ Quote from an early Ming ‘Mongol-bashing’ edict. See *Veritable Records of the Ming*, Hongwu, *juan* 34, 617. As for the Ming restructuring of the Yuan prototype, for example, ‘Birds’ [飛禽], ‘Quadrupeds’ [走獸], and ‘Insects and Fishes’ [虫魚] were merged into a single big category of ‘Birds and Beasts’ [鳥獸] i.e. animals in general.

- I. 天文門 [Heavenly Patterns]: 19 entries
- II. 地理門 [Earthly Features]: 38 entries
- III. 時令門 [Time and Seasons]: 24 entries
- IV. 花木門 ['Flowers and Trees' = Plants]: 38 entries
- V. 鳥獸門 ['Birds and Beasts' = Animals]: 110 entries
- VI. 宮室門 ['Palaces and Chambers' = Buildings]: 17 entries
- VII. 器用門 [Tools and Utensils]: 71 entries
- VIII. 衣服門 ['Jackets and Dresses' = Clothing]: 26 entries
- IX. 飲食門 [Food and Drink]: 28 entries
- X. 珍寶門 [Treasures]: 13 entries
- XI. 人物門 [Humans]: 86 entries
- XII. 人事門 [Human Affairs]: 140 entries
- XIII. 聲色門 [Colours]: 17 entries
- XIV. 數目門 [Numbers]: 35 entries
- XV. 身體門 [The Human Body]: 76 entries
- XVI. 方隅門 [Directions]: 17 entries
- XVII. 通用門 [Words of Common Use]: 83 entries

As can be seen, the vocabulary of this 1389 glossary is semasiological: it is arranged according to thematic categories and does not follow a phonetic (e.g. alphabetical) or graphical order (e.g. character components). These basic 17 categories were kept for most later Ming glossaries. Typical was also to conclude with a 'spare parts box' of words that did not fit anywhere else.⁵⁶ Some language departments created additional categories, such as 'Fragrances and Medicine' [香药] in the Ming or Qing Chinese-Tibetan *yiyu* in the *Crawford Chinese Collection* of the *John Rylands Library* in Manchester, which makes sense given the diffusion of Tibetan medicine in China, especially in the Mongol era.⁵⁷ This semasiological structure, however, should not be explained by peculiarities of the Chinese writing system alone. Taking a closer look at the Mongol-era glossaries of the Islamic world, we find that despite differences in motivation and scope, most are arranged by thematic categories similar to the ones of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* (frequently starting with 'Sky/Astronomy,' followed by 'Earth/Geography'), although Arabic or Persian is usually the control language, so that an alphabetical order would have been possible.⁵⁸ The format of this early Ming glossary is therefore strongly based on Mongol precedent.

Regarding the level of linguistic sophistication, it is too general to state, as Daniel Kane did, that "the scholars of the *Bureau of Interpreters*, like those of the *Bureau of Translators*, were not well known for their competence in the languages they studied, or for their care in transcription."⁵⁹ If this were so, one wonders how

⁵⁶ This seventeenth *yiyu* category has been investigated by Nappi (2015), "Translating Miscellany."

⁵⁷ For the role of Tibetan medicine in Mongol times as a bridge between Chinese and Eurasian or 'Islamic' medicine, see Paul D. Buell (2010), "Tibetans, Mongols and the Fusion of Eurasian Cultures," in Akasoy, Burnett & Yoeli-Tlalim, *Islam and Tibet*, 189-208.

⁵⁸ For a comprehensive analysis, see Allsen (2001), "Rasûlid Hexaglot."

⁵⁹ Kane (1989), *Sino-Jurchen Vocabulary*, 100.

Kane himself, and others, were able to reconstruct a dead language (Jurchen) on the basis of *yiyu*-vocabulary compiled by the staff of the two *Bureaus*. The transcription method of the seminal early Ming *yiyu*, the *Sino-Barbarian Translations*, is actually quite elaborate and offers, as Rossabi remarked, an “excellent transcription”⁶⁰ of fourteenth-century Mongolian. In the words of the *yiyu* preface, the “extremely complicated” [繁複爲甚] Mongolian script had to be “transformed” [變] to make Mongolian sounds audible to Chinese ears.⁶¹ The original guidelines on how to read Mongolian words in Chinese transcription, attached to the 1389 preface, can illustrate the relative precision of the transcription system. As the translators were well aware, there are “sounds [in Mongolian] for which there are no characters [in Chinese]” [有聲無字者]. Their solution:

[First,] the small ‘annotating character’ 中 at the side of another character [indicates] the sound inside the throat. Exemplary cases are 中合 [χa] and 中忽 [χu]. [Second,] the small ‘annotating character’ 舌 at the side of a character [indicates] the sound of the tongue. You have to trill your tongue when pronouncing it. Exemplary cases are 舌兒 [-r], 舌里 [ri], 舌刺 [ra], 舌魯 [ru], and 舌侖 [run] [一。字傍小注中字者，乃喉內音也。如中合中忽之類。一。字傍小注舌字者，乃舌頭音也。必彈舌讀之。如舌兒舌里舌刺舌魯舌侖之類].⁶²

Many more examples follow. As can be seen, the compilers of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* introduced an innovative system, in which ordinary Chinese characters were used as diacritics and written next to the characters the pronunciation of which they were intended to modify. Thus, 中 in the guidelines above indicates a velar consonant in the onset, while 舌 points to an alveolar flap (the ‘r-sound’).⁶³ That the compilers decided to employ standard Chinese characters to such a purpose and did not use the already existing universal transcription system of Phagspa, is certainly due to the fact that its symbolism (Mongol supremacy on the level of publicly displayed written language) was still freshly in mind.⁶⁴ This illustrates nicely, again, how the Ming had to strike a difficult balance between continuing Mongol traditions

⁶⁰ Morris Rossabi (2014), “Ming Officials and Northwest China,” in *The Writings of Morris Rossabi* (Leiden: Brill), 98.

⁶¹ Liu (1971 [1389]), *Preface to the Chinese-Barbarian Translations*, 2.

⁶² “Notes on Using the *Chinese-Barbarian Translations and Transcriptions*” [華夷譯語凡例], in Huo & Ma (1971 [1389]), *Huayi yiyu*.

⁶³ For an analysis of *yiyu* transcription systems, see Ákos Bertalan Apatóczky (2009), *Yiyu* [譯語]: *An Indexed Critical Edition of a Sixteenth Century Sino-Mongolian Glossary* (Honolulu), esp. 28-29. Apatóczky also shows how the innovative transcription methods developed in the early Ming deteriorated in the course of the dynasty.

⁶⁴ See my discussion of the Phagspa script in Chapter Two.

and breaking with them. Hence, Liu Sanwu, in his 1389 glossary preface, almost hastens to assure his readers that “considering the Central Realm’s infinite characters and completely sufficient [inventory of] sounds, how could we not be able to translate [Mongolian]” [顧以中國無窮之字，全備之音，豈不足以譯之]?

What was the purpose of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations*? *Yiyu* have been called “very simple” vocabularies “for basic communication with no indication of grammatical rules whatsoever”⁶⁵; their “limited aim” has been defined as being “able to communicate, on a basic level, with ‘barbarians’ on the rare occasion when this was absolutely inevitable, as when they brought tribute to the Court.”⁶⁶ But this is far from evident. To begin with, while basic communication does not imply the inclusion of abstract grammar, some elementary sentences will be essential. However, I could memorise all 845 entries of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* immaculately and would still not be able to even say ‘hello’ to a Mongol envoy. If the *yiyu* editors of 1389 aimed at basic communication, why did they include 110 words in the ‘Animals’ category—from dogs to camels to parrots to various insects, spiders, ants, glowworms, snakes, worms, frogs, paying attention even to the flea and the louse—but not a single simple sentence?⁶⁷ Were Chinese officials really so eager to converse with foreign envoys about the ‘armpit’ (lemma 692 in Appendix B, 腋), the ‘gallbladder’ (703, 膽), the ‘lung’ (702, 肺), ‘liver’ (701, 肝) ‘kidney’ (708, 腰子), ‘bone marrow’ (719, 髓), ‘saliva’ (727, 唾), and ‘nasal mucus’ (725, 涕)? This category of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations*, ‘The Human Body,’ seems rather like a good basic vocabulary of medical terms and thus a useful tool for translations such as the Persian-to-Chinese *Muslim Prescriptions*.⁶⁸ We should not be too sure that *yiyu* were only produced for diplomatic settings, as is invariably assumed in all scholarship, provided that their purpose is discussed at all. It is not impossible that they were meant to be used in more complex translation practices as well.

To understand that a more practical kind of glossary would have well been possible, we just have to take a look at the work produced by translators across early Ming China’s borders. The Korean equivalent to the Ming *Bureau of Translators*, the *Sayeok weon*, compiled in the fourteenth century a manual of colloquial Chinese, the *Nogeoldae* 老乞大 [*Old Chinese*], consisting mainly of dialogues and focusing on the

⁶⁵ Apatóczy (2009), *Yiyu*, 16.

⁶⁶ Kane (1989), *Sino-Jurchen Vocabulary*, 100.

⁶⁷ Note, however, that some later *yiyu* do contain basic sentences. See the examples in Chapter Three.

⁶⁸ For the *Muslim Prescriptions* of the late Yuan or early Ming, see Chapter Three.

language actually used in travel, business, banquets, and medicine.⁶⁹ It thus begins with basic communication in the proper sense and its first dialogue is:

“大哥你從那裏來。	Elder brother, where do you come from?
我從高麗王京來。	I come from the royal capital of Korea.
如今那裏去。	Where are you going now?
我往北京去。	I am going to Beijing.” ⁷⁰

This material stands in sharp contrast to the *Sino-Barbarian Translations*, which try to pin down, in a manner of speaking, the universe in 845 words—beginning with the heavens, then moving down to earth, listing kinds of people, body parts, animals, plants, and so forth—and which should be characterised as a ‘universal’ dictionary on a small scale. “There is,” in Liu Sanwu’s words, no category “that would not be contained in the glossary.” However, it should not be called a guide to basic communication (though one could expand one’s vocabulary greatly with it, provided that some Mongolian is already present). Also, if these glossaries were indeed used to communicate in the proper sense of the word, then certainly not only “on the rare occasion” (Kane) when foreign envoys presented tribute at the Chinese court.⁷¹ This image of China, just idly sitting ‘in the middle of everything’ and waiting for others to arrive, is actually the image projected by traditional Chinese historiography. Such visits were not rare but took place on a fairly regular basis due to the connection between trade and the tributary system, as analysed in Chapter Three. Moreover, the Chinese travelled just as much to the ‘barbarians’ as vice versa, which is explicitly noted by Liu Sanwu when he states that since the creation of the 1389 *yiyu*, Chinese “envoys who pass through the desert are all able to convey their intentions.”

While practical purposes were an important impetus for the *Sino-Barbarian Translations*, as is expressed by entries pointing to typical tributary items (such as lemmata 121, 虎 ‘tiger’; 123, 獅子 ‘lion’; 125, 馬 ‘horse’; 148, 駱駝, ‘camel’; 149, 象 ‘elephant’; 211, 花豹, ‘leopard’; 220. 角, ‘horns’; 221. 皮, ‘skins’), the efforts of the glossary compilers can not be reduced to that. Other *yiyu* items contradict this assumption (see my discussion of the medical vocabulary above) as does the earlier transcription and translation of the Mongolian-language *Secret History* through a

⁶⁹ On the *Nogeoldae*, see Stephen Alexander Wadley (1987), “A Translation of the ‘Lao Qida’ and Investigation into Certain of Its Syntactic Structures,” PhD Thesis, University of Washington. *Qida* 乞大 means ‘Chinese’ (deriving from the Mongolian form of the ‘foreign’ Khitan dynasty in China, related to Persian *Kita* كُتَا and English *Cathay*). ‘Old Chinese’ refers to the dialect of North China.

⁷⁰ Based on Wadley (1987), “Lao Qida,” 13.

⁷¹ Kane (1989), *Sino-Jurchen Vocabulary*, 100.

system similar to the 1389 *yi*yu.⁷² The fact that the *Secret History* translation was included in the *Great Canon of the Yongle Era*—an attempt to collect all works of Chinese literature considered significant—shows that this work was not only of a practical nature, a ‘Mongolian language textbook’ for native speakers of Chinese (which it surely was as well). It was also an effort in cultural glory, demonstrating that the Ming were worthy successors of the Mongols by translating their history into the imperially sanctioned treasury of knowledge. And this is the case for *yi*yu-glossaries, too. If it is true that knowing languages evolved into a symbol of universal rulership under the Mongols, it makes sense for the early Ming to compile the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* as an attempt to continue that kind of symbolism.

A transcription of the 845 ‘lemmata’ of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations*, plus English translations for reference, is provided in Appendix B to illustrate this point. By limiting itself to the Chinese material, Appendix B simulates *en passant*—for those readers who happen to be English speakers without knowing Chinese—how this glossary would have looked like for a Mongol literate only in Mongolian: reading the translations is easy, but there is no hint as to how the lemmata themselves should be pronounced. As argued in Chapter Four, this unidirectionality results from the glossary being exclusively aimed at Chinese officials. Thus, when Liu’s preface notes that “an imperial edict ordered to print and circulate it” [詔刊行之], this surely does not imply that the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* became widely available. Most definitely, it refers to their use by said officials. Studying the lexicon of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations*, we can ‘read back’ not only to the possibly purposes of the glossary, but also to the word collectors. What interested them and who were they?

With these questions in mind we make a highly interesting discovery: various entries of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* suggest that the word collectors took Mongolian as their basis and not Chinese, that is, not just the Mongolian language but a specific Mongolian lexicon. Consider lemma 209, for instance:

⁷² An edict of 1382 and Liu Sanwu’s 1389 preface both point out that the *Secret History* was used “for reference” [參考] in finding a systematic transcription method for the *Sino-Barbarian Translations*. The exact years, in which the Chinese version of the *Secret History* was created, are unknown. The year 1382 must be regarded *terminus ante quem*, due to the edict of that year stating that the *Secret History* was used “for reference,” which must mean the translation, not the Mongolian original. The year 1368 suggests itself as *terminus post quem*, as Yuan scholars would have had less motivation for such a translation, due to the mechanisms discussed in Chapter Three. It must remain open at this point whether the *Secret History* translation was created by the team of Khoninchi and Ma Shaiyihei as well.

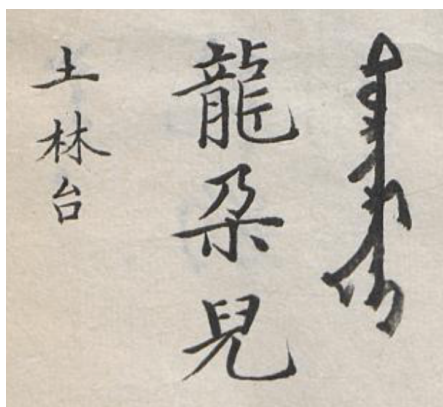


Figure 18. Entry 209 (male hawk) from the *Sino-Barbarian Translations*⁷³

That this lemma indicates a male hawk can *only* be inferred from the transcription of the Mongolian word as 土^舌林台 “turintai” (*turimtai*)—and, of course, from the unambiguous spelling of the word in Mongolian script—but *not* from the lemma *longduo’er* 龍朵兒, which is clearly not a Chinese term but yet another foreign word in transcription! In short, a non-Chinese word is explained by another non-Chinese word through the medium of Chinese characters. While the Chinese ‘lemma’ (if we can call it thus) *longduo’er* is obscure, the Mongolian word *turimtai* is well known.⁷⁴ Similarly, lemma 214 points to another bird, called *jaghalmay* in Mongolian, as the transcription shows, while the Chinese lemma, *baixiong* 百雄, must again be a loan word (possibly from Persian *bāzān* ‘falcons’), as the literal meaning of 百雄 ‘one hundred heroes’ makes no sense as a translation of *jaghalmay*.⁷⁵ It is not surprising that there were more Mongolian than Chinese words for falcons and eagles, given the well-known Mongol tradition of training such birds to hunt, described already in Marco Polo’s account. Looking at these cases, we must wonder if the Chinese or rather the Mongolian words should be considered the actual lemmata of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations*—and if this distinction makes sense at all. In the bigger picture, this kind of vocabulary illustrates perfectly how the Ming shared repertoires of rule with courts across Eurasia, such as falconry.⁷⁶

⁷³ Late Ming edition of ‘Hirth Ms. 1,’ *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin*, vol. I, book 1, fol. 29r. In this edition, the character 舌 as a diacritic in the early Ming form “土^舌林台” has been lost and only “土林台” remains, making the pronunciation of the Mongolian word less clear for Chinese speakers.

⁷⁴ Claus Schönig (2000), *Mongolische Lehnwörter im Westghesischen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz), 182, has a list of glosses of *turimtai* drawn from the secondary literature: “irgendein kleiner Raubvogel, ein kleiner Falke,” “male of any kind of hawk, small-sized birds of prey,” etc.

⁷⁵ Ferdinand Diederich Lessing (2013 [1960]), *Mongolian-English Dictionary* (London: Routledge), 1023, translates *jaghalmay* as “crossbill,” a kind of finch.

⁷⁶ Allsen (2006), *Royal Hunt*.

Further proof for the roots of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* in the Mongolian lexicon is found in various items of the ‘Food and Drink’ category, clearly alluding to the Mongol and not the Chinese diet, such as the lemmata 362 (酪, cheese), 365 (乾酪, dried cheese), 363 (馬奶子, horse milk), 364 (駝奶子, camel milk), 355 (酥油, butter). Lemma 366 (熬酪, ‘boiled curdled milk’) certainly refers to yogurt, clarified by the Mongolian equivalent *a’a’rchi* 阿阿兒赤 = *arci* = *aarts*, a kind of yogurt or cottage cheese the Mongols still produce.⁷⁷ Lemma 367 (乳餅, ‘milk cake’) must refer to another kind of Mongol-typical yogurt or cheese but without a close examination of the Mongolian equivalent we cannot be certain what is meant. In the category ‘Humans,’ lemmata 455 (師公, male shaman) and 456 (師婆, female shaman) are also clearly based on the Mongolian lexicon and culture. These entries about male and female priests remind us *en passant* of the still under-researched history of how the rule of non-Chinese regimes in North China, before the Tang, contributed to the relatively high status of Tang elite women, by bringing with them the greater equality of men and women that characterised nomadic societies.⁷⁸

4. Conclusion

This chapter suggested that the status of early Ming translators was not as low as commonly assumed in scholarship. This has been elaborated, first, through a study of recruitment and career patterns within the *Bureau of Translators*. Second, the chapter distinguished professional translators and ‘unprofessionals,’ showing that the latter in particular, regular officials like Khoninchi and Ma Shayihe who happened to be bilingual, could achieve high positions in early Ming institutions such as the *Hanlin Academy*. Moreover, the chapter placed translation in a larger context of the early Ming educational system by looking at actual translation practices in their institutional environments and drew attention to a characteristic division of labour between monolingual ‘Chinese’ officials and bilingual ‘foreigners.’

A case study has shown that native speakers of Mongolian were pivotal actors in the creation of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations*. Two of them we know by name: Khoninchi, the man “from the desert people who was born in *Huaxia*” [乃朔漠之

⁷⁷ Charles Perry (2011), “Dried, Frozen and Rotted: Food Preservation in Central Asia and Siberia,” in *Cured, Fermented and Smoked Foods: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 2010* (Totnes: Prospect Books), 242: “The Mongols (...) make some preserved dairy products with names that evidently derive from the Turkish root *aghar-* ‘to become white.’ See *ibid.* for examples.

⁷⁸ See Lewis (2009), *Cosmopolitan Empire*, 180-189.

族，生於華夏]， and Ma Shayihe, whose origin lay somewhere in the Western Regions.⁷⁹ This 1389 *yiyu* glossary is a good opportunity to reconsider the topos of the “Sino-centric Ming Empire.”⁸⁰ Examples for sinocentrism in official rhetoric have appeared throughout the thesis, just as I have shown that the real world and practical policies often looked very different. The approach of this early Ming glossary can be said to represent both extremes. It is sinocentric in the sense that it is unidirectional, exclusively aimed at officials who read Chinese, and constructing for these officials a position of cultural superiority through paratextual material (Liu Sanwu’s preface). The examination of its lexicon, however, suggests just the opposite. A sinocentric approach on that level would mean that a Chinese lexicon already existed as a basis for lemmata and compilers were just looking for equivalents in Mongolian. As I have shown, however, that was not the case: not only did the word collectors take the Mongolian language as their basis but often a specific Mongolian lexicon. They introduced words that must have been new to many Chinese scholars and even translated some foreign (Mongolian) words through other foreign words.

Looking at the bigger picture, the chapter has shown that the compilation of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* from 1382 to 1389 united Mongol legacy on four levels: the institutional (compilation through bilingual *Hanlin* officials who were either inherited personnel or had a ‘Mongol migration background’), the biographical (the Mongolian speakers Ma Shayihe and Khoninchi as compilers), the text-structural (the *yiyu* format as a Yuan invention), and the lexical one (the roots of much vocabulary in the Mongolian, not in the Chinese lexicon). As specific as some of these linguistic micro-levels might seem, it is exactly this specificity that illustrates the extent of the Mongol legacy.

⁷⁹ Liu (1971 [1389]), *Preface to the Chinese-Barbarian Translations*, 2. Ma Shayihe’s background has been discussed in detail in Chapter One.

⁸⁰ Lin (2011), *Ethnic Frontiers*, xxiv.

CONCLUSION

宇宙之大，同此一月。¹

“The world is so vast, but still everyone looks up at the same moon.”

— Shen Fu 沈復

“Without translation, there is no history of the world.”²

— L. G. Kelly

In light of the evidence put forward in this thesis, the distinction between multilingual foreign dynasties (Yuan, Qing) and monolingual Chinese dynasties (Ming) must seem questionable. This has been elaborated not only on the basis of Ming multilingual edicts, steles, and printed books, the evidence even included material artefacts, such as porcelain, lacquerware, textiles, and seals with non-Chinese inscriptions. Some multilingual creations spoke to larger audiences abroad, such as the steles of Galle and Yongning. Other works expected multilingual audiences at home, such as the Pentaglot Halima Account. Those audiences were expected to speak languages of a major group of *Semu* people the Mongols had relied on (Persian), the language of a foreign religion the Mongols had integrated into court ritual (Tibetan), and the language of the Mongols themselves (Mongolian). The great variety of evidence I have presented suggests that such works are no exceptions but part of a systematic strand of multilingualism. This is significant, as it points to a Yuan-Ming-Qing continuity that has been rather overlooked so far. Multilingualism, usually associated with ‘foreign’ regimes and not with ‘Chinese’ ones, could also be seen as a late imperial continuity: sometimes more visible and more pronounced (Yuan, Qing) and sometimes less (Ming, especially in its founding phase), it always existed as an undercurrent of Chinese empires. Works such as the Pentaglot Halima Account of the early Ming claim authority over multiple heritages just as multilingual steles of the Yuan or pentaglot inscriptions of the Qing.

¹ Shen Fu 沈復 (1877), *Fusheng liuji* 浮生六記, *juan* 1. Translation Leonard Pratt & Chiang Su-hui (1983), *Six Records of a Floating Life* (London: Penguin).

² L. G. Kelly (1979), *The True Interpreter: A History of Translation Theory and Practice in the West* (New York: St. Martin's Press).

This thesis has also shown, through the lens of language and translation, that perceptions of the (early) Ming as anti-Mongol, antiforeign, nationalist or xenophobic are not well-grounded. Rather than an alien force that was triumphantly expelled in 1368, the Mongols were for the Ming founders, in various respects, a source of inspiration. At the same time, the Ming founders were not free of the *Hua-Yi* bias of Chinese tradition, a situation I have described as the ‘Hongwu dilemma.’ From the Hongwu dilemma, many contradictions explored in this thesis arose. In particular, it led to substantial differences between sinocentric rhetoric and practical politics—and the failure to separate those aspects is one origin of the image of the ‘closed’ Ming. Ming rulers promised to expel the wretched barbarians *and* explicitly allowed them to stay, as long as they brought certain talents. Qualified foreigners were encouraged to make military and civilian careers. Early Ming rulers stated clearly that loyalty, not ethnicity was key. An emphasis of the ‘multi-cultural’ aspects of the Ming, however, should include the insight that they were a logical consequence of the interests and needs of imperial administrations in general.

This thesis established the early Ming linguistic landscape as a distinct field of the Mongol legacy, in addition to other such fields that had been discovered and examined earlier, such as customs (Serruys), the Ming military (Serruys, Taylor, Dreyer), martial spectacles (Robinson), and cosmopolitanism in general (Robinson, Clunas, Brook). It has shown how for the fledgling dynasty language and translation policies harmonised the needs for both continuity *and* a break. While Chinese was *de facto* reinstituted as the major imperial language—meaning that, unlike under the Yuan, edicts were not *per se* issued in bilingual form—, former imperial languages (Mongolian, Persian) were integrated into the early Ming treasury of linguistic knowledge and ability. This ability included even languages that fell outside status planning. That the Galle Stele was prepared at home before being erected abroad shows that the Ming had scribes able to write in less global languages, such as Tamil, not studied in a distinct *Bureau of Translators* department.

The thesis refuted the idea that, in contrast to their Mongol predecessors, the Ming had little symbolic use for non-Chinese scripts. Very much in contrast, both practical and symbolic aspects of translation were significant to the Ming’s universal imperial claim. Also, labelling the Ming ‘antiforeign’ is at least imprecise, as foreigners played a crucial role for the universal claim, both in rhetoric and in their actual physical presence at the capital. Thus, I have argued that the foundation of the *Bureau of Translators* should not be seen as the ‘standard’ institute for language

mediation that would have existed anyway, but as part of a series of early Ming policies expressing universal imperial ambition, such as Zheng He's westbound embassies on the sea and Yishiha's northbound embassies on land. Significantly, both embassies installed trilingual steles abroad. The application of concepts drawn from Linguistic Landscape Studies (LLS) to these steles has shown that their functions were both communicative (practical) and emblematic (symbolic). They were communicative, as they translated the early Ming world order to wider audiences, and emblematic, because their professional multilingualism evoked the Mongol era and symbolised the universality of Ming rule. We might also say that such steles achieved the 'translation of empire' both literally (by translating the Ming claim into different languages) and metaphorically (by supporting the *translatio imperii*, the transfer of legitimacy from Yuan to Ming, through continuation of Mongol practices in the realm of written language). Multilingual steles transformed natural space into social, cultural and political space and—through language choices—selected and *expected* certain audiences in such demarcated space, such as the arrival of Chinese-reading audiences in the Amur river region outside the empire proper. I have argued that the Galle stele, in particular, exemplifies the Ming court's cross-cultural competence (knowledge about a very specific local god on Sri Lanka who is glorified in the appropriate language and script), multilingual ability (the three texts on the stele themselves), and employment of specialised artisans able to translate even less global scripts such as Tamil into lapidary inscriptions.

While Chapters One to Three depicted the early Ming basically as cosmopolitan and in need of translation for various purposes. Chapter Four painted a differentiated picture by showing that, despite cosmopolitanism, notions of sinicisation continued to play a role for early Ming rulers. We discovered two opposite movements. The movement of authoritative foreign text to the centre through translation can be seen as a movement *opposite* to the movement of *jiaohua* (transformation through education, the civilising process), which emanates from the centre. These movements can also be understood as 'outgoing sinicisation' (*jiaohua*) and 'ingoing sinicisation' (translation of imperial knowledge from the outside). While prohibitions from speaking 'barbarian languages' (*huyu*) were occasionally seen as part of such sinicisation policies, I have argued that, in all probability, they did not target private use of non-Chinese languages but their use in court and other official contexts. Such languages served as markers of distinction for elites of the old regime, creating networks of power that could not be controlled easily by the Ming (such as Persian as a *lingua franca* in the *Islamic Astronomical Bureau*).

The cosmopolitan and multilingual aspects of the Ming also seemed, at first glance, to run counter to prevalent scholarly depictions of the *Bureau of Translators* and translators in Chinese history in general as degraded to a low status. In contrast, this thesis has suggested that the status of early Ming translators was not as low as commonly assumed in scholarship. This has been elaborated, first, through a study of recruitment and career patterns within the *Bureau of Translators*. Second, the thesis distinguished professional translators and ‘unprofessionals,’ showing that the latter in particular, regular officials like Khoninchi and Ma Shayihe who happened to be bilingual, could achieve high positions in early Ming institutions. The idea of the low status of translators might again be based on rhetoric rather than practice. While examples for sinocentrism in official rhetoric have appeared throughout the thesis, I have shown that rhetoric and practice often were very different. The approach of the 1389 *yiyu* glossary has been analysed as a case that represents both extremes. It is sinocentric in the sense that it is unidirectional, exclusively aimed at officials who read Chinese, and constructing for these officials a position of cultural superiority through paratextual material (Liu Sanwu’s preface). The examination of its lexicon, however, suggests just the opposite. A sinocentric approach on that level would mean that a Chinese lexicon already existed as a basis for lemmata and compilers were just looking for equivalents in Mongolian. However, that was not the case: not only did the word collectors take the Mongolian language as their basis but often a specific Mongolian lexicon. They introduced many words that must have been new to Chinese scholars and even translated some foreign (Mongolian) words through other foreign words.

In the bigger picture, the early Ming shows that imperial and other large-sized administrations are hardly created *ex nihilo*. In fact, they usually imitate their predecessors and adopt their legacies at least to a certain degree. Many other examples from history could be brought forward to illustrate this point. Between 1898 and the ‘revolution’ that led to the Republic of China in 1911, there had been reforms initiated by the Qing court and the ‘revolutionaries’ continued in various regards imperial reform policies. When the Communist Party of China took over, they collaborated with the Guomindang body of officials.³ The French Revolution continued many processes that had been well under way for a long time in the politics

³ Hence, Mao Zedong advised Luoyang front leaders, after Communist troops had captured the city in April 1948, to be “very prudent in the liquidation of the organs of Nationalist rule.” Quoted after Frederick Wakeman, Jr. (2010), “‘Clean Up’: The New Order in Shanghai,” in Brown & Pickowicz, *Dilemmas of Victory: The Early Years of the People’s Republic of China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 21-58.

of the *Ancien régime*.⁴ Times of great change are also times of continuity: trying to maintain power, many will not be overly fussy but prepared to make compromises even if the old regime is officially vilified. When, in 1644, the Ming was overthrown by the Manchus, the descendants of the Jurchens, whose language was studied in the early Ming *Bureau of Translators*, Qing rulers were quick to distance themselves from the ‘flawed’ and ‘decadent’ Ming but at the same time duplicated the Ming bureaucracy in all possible aspects to demonstrate legitimacy. Remembering how the early Ming treated their predecessors, one might be overcome by a sneaking feeling of watching the same play again, only with a different cast.

One day we might see the Yuan-Ming-Qing dynasties as a single period and regard distinctions between ‘Chinese’ and ‘alien’ dynasties as rather ephemeral. Specifically, what did the Ming inherit from the Yuan as regards attitudes to language and multilingualism and corresponding institutions? And what was handed down to the Qing? This thesis has shown that not only the Yuan and the Qing issued multilingual proclamations to project an image of universal rulership.⁵ The early Ming did the same, even if less extensively. Therefore, describing the Ming as fiercely anti-Mongol, antiforeign, xenophobic, and so forth, misses the depth and complexity of the court’s engagement with such groups as the Mongols, Jurchens, Tibetans, Central Eurasians, Uyghurs, Koreans, and their languages. In contrast to the popular idea of ‘monolingual native’ versus ‘multilingual foreign’ dynasties, a more advanced analysis would recognise that multilingualism, as a practice as well as a symbol, always existed as an undercurrent of ‘Chinese’ empires at least since the Yuan. Sometimes such multilingualism was more visible (Yuan, Qing) and sometimes less (Ming), but it always played a role in the establishment of the universal imperial claim. Ming subjects—whether commoners or officials—did not have to be able to read Mongolian, Persian, Jurchen, or Tamil stele inscriptions

⁴ François Furet (1981 [1978]) *Interpreting the French Revolution* [*Penser la Révolution Française*] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Alfred Cobban (1973 [1955]), “The Myth of the French Revolution,” in *Die französische Revolution: Anlässe und langfristige Ursachen*, ed. Eberhard Schmitt (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft), 170-194.

⁵ Particularly for the Qianlong 乾隆 emperor (r.1735-1796), multilingualism became a symbol of his claim to universal rule, and he both demanded and patronised multilingual training. The most spectacular result was the *Yuzhi wuti Qing wenjian* 御製五體清文鑑 [*Pentaglot Mirror of the Languages of the Qing*], including Manchu, Tibetan, Mongolian, Chagatai Turkish, and Chinese. It now exists in an elegant modern edition: Oliver Corff, Kyoko Maezono, Wolfgang Lipp, Dorjpalam Dorj, Görööchin Gerelmaa, Aysima Mirsultan, Réka Stüber, Byambajav Töwshintögs & Xieyan Li (ed.) (2013 [1794]). *Auf kaiserlichen Befehl erstelltes Wörterbuch des Manjurischen in fünf Sprachen, “Fünfsprachenspiegel”: Systematisch angeordneter Wortschatz auf Manjurisch, Tibetisch, Mongolisch, Turki und Chinesisch. Vollständige romanisierte und revidierte Ausgabe mit textkritischen Anmerkungen, deutschen Erläuterungen und Indizes*, 2 vols. & 5 index vols. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz).

(actually, not even the Chinese version), Tibetan invocations on porcelains bowls, or seal impressions in Phagspa script in order to understand the emblematic message: *I am the Son of Heaven, I command many people and speak to you in the many languages of the Khan in whose footsteps I follow.*

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³ “Junast” is the transcription of a Mongolian name. The author uses the form “照那斯图” when publishing in Chinese and the form “Junast” when publishing in English.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Selected primary sources in annotated interlinear translation

1. Wu Bozong: *Book on Heavenly Patterns* paratext¹

皇上奉天明命，撫臨華夷，車書大同，人文宣朗。

His Imperial Majesty follows the Mandate of Heaven² and accomplishes Heaven's orders.³ He rules over Chinese and barbarians alike. [The country's] chariots and books [i.e. military and civil administration] are in unified order⁴, human culture is enlightened.

爰自洪武初，大將軍平元都，收其圖籍經傳子史，凡若干萬卷。

At the beginning of the Hongwu reign [1368-1398], the Generals-in-chief [of the conquering Ming armies] pacified the Yuan capital and captured its land charts and census registers, its classics and commentaries, and its works of ancient philosophers and historical records⁵, altogether several tens of thousands of scrolls.

悉上進京師藏之書府。萬幾之暇，即召儒臣進講，以資治道。其間西域書數百冊，言殊字異，無能知者。

All [these books] were brought [from the Yuan capital] into the Imperial Library of the [new] capital [Nanjing]. [As soon as the emperor found] a moment of leisure in his manifold governmental affairs, he summoned his Confucian officials⁶ [who] explained and commented on [the newly discovered books], in order to support governmental policy. Among them were several hundreds of books from the Western Regions, [full of] peculiar words and foreign characters. There was no one able to understand them.

¹ Wu Bozong 吳伯宗 (1996 [1383]). *Yi Tianwen shu xu* 譯天文書序 [Preface of the Translated 'Heavenly Patterns'], in Ma & Chen, *Zhongguo huihui lifa*, 2.

² 奉天 is an abbreviation for 奉行天命 “follow the will of / pursue the Mandate of Heaven.” Cf. HYDCD, s.v. 奉天.

³ Cf. HYDCD, s.v. 明命, def. 1. 明命 should not be understood in the sense of “enlightened orders” or the like. Instead, 明 is a verb that takes 命 as its object.

⁴ Are there deeper connotations in the phrase “車書大同”? Is the author consciously referring to the unification policy of Qin Shi Huang 秦始皇 (259 - 210 BC)? This passage of the *Zhongyong* 中庸 [Doctrine of the Mean] could be the basis for our source: “今天下車同軌，書同文，行同倫。” Lao Siguang 勞斯光 asserts in his *New History of Chinese Philosophy* 新編中國哲學史 (1927), vol. 2, p. 45, that this is probably referring to Qin unification policy. However, while we know that the *Zhongyong* might have been edited into its definite form after the Qin, for early Ming scholars such as Wu Bozong it was written by Zisi 子思 (c. 481-402 BC), grandson of Confucius. Hence, a Ming scholar would not associate the phrase “車書大同” with the concrete historical figure Qin Shi Huang, but rather with a general idea of unification and order.

⁵ I could not track down a term “子史” yet, but 子 apparently stands for *zishu* 子書, i.e. the pre-Qin works of the *zhuzi* 諸子 (“all philosophers”), i.e. Laozi 老子, Zhuanzi 莊子, Mozi 墨子, Junzi 荀子, Han Feizi 韓非子, Guigu zi 鬼谷子, etc., while 史 stands for *shishu* 史書, i.e. the standard histories—or maybe rather for historical records in general.

⁶ Should *ruchen* 儒臣 be translated “Confucian officials” or just “officials”? Every person in the Ming who would be called *ruchen* had been successful in the examinations—based on the *Sishu* 四書, edited by Zhu Xi. In this sense all *ruchen* in the Ming could even be called “Neo-Confucians,” but *not* in the sense of a specific school. A *ruchen*, as somebody employed by the Imperial bureaucracy, is quite different from a “Neo-Confucian” (*lixuejia* 理學家 or *daoxuejia* 道學家, respectively). Only a *lixuejia* or a *daoxuejia* (but not a *ruchen*) would be listed in a work such as Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610-1695) famous *Mingru xue'an* 明儒學案 [Scholarly Annals of Ming Confucians].

十五年秋九月癸亥，上御奉天門召翰林臣李翀、臣吳伯宗而諭之曰。

In the autumn of the ninth month of the fifteenth year on the day *guihai* [24 October 1382], His Majesty the Emperor summoned the Hanlin officials Li Chong and Wu Bozong to the Gate of Heavenly Worship and instructed them thus:

天道幽微，垂象以示人。人君體天行道，乃成治功。

“The principles of Heaven are profound and subtle. [Heaven] displays omens in order to instruct people. The Emperor pays attention to the will of Heaven and fulfils its principles, consequently establishing successful governance.”

古之帝王，仰觀天文，俯察地理，以修人事，育萬物。由是文籍以興，彝倫攸敘。

“The ancient emperors and kings ‘looked upward’⁷ and observed the patterns of the sky⁸ and they looked downward and examined the features of the earth’⁹, so as to put in order human affairs and to nourish the ten thousand things. Accordingly, books and writing flourished and human relationships were regulated.”¹⁰

邇來西域陰陽家，推測天象至爲精密，有驗其緯度之法，又中國書之所未備。

“Recently, astronomers came from the Western Regions. Their calculation and observation¹¹ of celestial phenomena has reached exceptional precision. They have a method for measuring [planetary] latitude (*weidu* 緯度).¹² This is something not yet contained in the books of the Middle Kingdom.

⁷ 仰 could also be understood in the sense of ‘to rely on’: “仰觀天文 They relied on observation of celestial patterns” would make sense. However, the parallelism “仰觀 look upwards and observe — 俯察 look downwards and examine” suggests to understand 仰 in its literal sense of ‘face upward.’

⁸ In order to avoid anachronisms, I usually refrain from translating *tianwen* 天文 and *dili* 地理 with names of modern scientific disciplines like ‘astronomy’ and ‘geography.’ I would argue that *tianwen* is best translated as ‘heavenly patterns,’ as the Chinese term comprises astronomy in the modern sense, but also astrology and all kinds of meteorological phenomena. This becomes abundantly clear by studying the lemmata of the first category (*men*), namely *Tianwen*, of the *Sino-Barbarian Translations* (1389) or the respective lemmata of other *yiyu*-glossaries.

⁹ Wu Bozong took the eight characters in quotation marks (仰觀天文，俯察地理) almost verbatim from the chapter *Xici* 繫辭 of the *Jing shi yizhuan* 京氏易傳 [Master Jing’s Commentary and Transmission of the Book of Changes], a commented version of the Confucian classic *Yijing* 易經 [Book of Changes] written by the Han Dynasty scholar Jing Fang 京房 (77-37 BC). The full passage begins thus: “易與天地準，故能彌綸天地之道。仰以觀於天文，俯以察於地理，是故知幽明之故。” Wu Bozong just did without the grammatical particles *yi* 以 and *yu* 於。

¹⁰ “彝倫攸敘” is another quotation, this time from the *Shangshu* 尚書, ch. *Hongfan* 洪範.

¹¹ The verb *tuice* 推測 in modern Chinese means “to speculate, conjecture, guess.” However, it is important to understand *tui* 推 and *ce* 測 as two *separate* verbs (or substantives) in the current sentence.

¹² The term *weidu* 緯度 in this passage has been translated as “(geographical) latitude” by Han Qi (2001), “Astronomy, Chinese and Western: The Influence of Xu Guangqi’s Views in the Early and Mid-Qing,” in: *Statecraft and Intellectual Renewal in Late Ming China: The Cross-Cultural Synthesis of Xu Guangqi (1562-1633)*, eds. Catherine Jami, Peter M. Engelfriet & Gregory Blue (Leiden), 364, as if Wu Bozong had employed the modern technical term *weidu*, but that might be anachronistic. Wu Bozong probably does not mean *weidu* (geographical latitude) in the modern sense; instead, he coined *wei-du* 緯度 in the sense of “degree 度 of the planets 緯” to name an achievement of Islamic astronomy that was (as shown by Dalen, “Astronomical Tables,” 19) a novelty for Chinese astronomers: the theory of *planetary latitudes*. I suggest that *wei* 緯 has to be understood in the sense of the ancient astronomical term *weixing* 緯星, ‘planets,’ as opposed to *jingxing* 經星, ‘fixed stars.’ The latitude of a planet is the inclination of its orbit to the plane of the ecliptic. The ecliptic is the apparent circle that describes the path that the Sun takes in the course of one year against the background stars.

“此其有關於天人甚大，宜譯其書以時披閱。庶幾觀象，可以省躬修德，思患預防，順天心，立民命焉。¹³

“The importance of this for Heaven and Man is truly great. We certainly should translate their books and study them whenever appropriate, so that in observing celestial phenomena¹⁴ we may critically examine ourselves, cultivate virtue, take protective measures against calamities in due time, follow the will of Heaven, and cultivate the moral character of the populace.¹⁵”

遂召欽天監靈臺郎臣海達兒、臣阿答兀丁、回回大師臣馬沙亦黑、臣馬哈麻等，咸至於廷，出所藏書，擇其言天文陰陽曆象者，次第譯之。

Thereupon [the emperor] summoned the Director¹⁶ of the Imperial Observatory [靈臺郎]¹⁷ of the Directorate of Astronomy (*Qintianjian* 欽天監), [namely] the official Haida'er 海達兒, [as well as] the official Adawuding 阿答兀丁, the official and Great Muslim Master (*Huihui Dashi* 回回大師) Ma Shayihei 馬沙亦黑, the official Ma Hama 馬哈麻, and others. They all arrived at the court, [where] the collected books were shown [to them]. They chose those [books] that were discussing heavenly patterns, yin-yang-studies, and calendar science and translated them one [book] after the other.

且命之曰：“爾西域人，素習本音，兼通華語，其口以授儒；爾儒譯其義，輯成文焉。惟真述，毋藻繪，毋忽。”

Furthermore, [the emperor] gave them these orders: “People from the Western Regions, you are familiar with your own language [本音] and at the same time you understand Chinese (*Huayu* 華語), [therefore] you will instruct the Confucian scholars orally. Confucian scholars, you will translate the meanings and join them together into a text. Narrate nothing but the truth, refrain from literary embellishments, but do not omit [anything either].”

¹³ Interestingly, 246 years later, this passage (from “邇來西域陰陽家” to “立民命焉”) is quoted by the famous late-Ming astronomer and translator Xu Guangqi 徐光啓 (1562-1633) in a memorial as a precedent for the use of ‘Western’ (Jesuit) expertise. In Xu’s memorial there are only some minor differences (concerning mainly variant characters): A. Wu: 以時披閱; Xu: 隨時披閱. B. Wu: 精密有驗; Xu: 精密有驗. C. Wu: 此其有關; Xu: 此其有閱. D. the passage “思患預防” is missing in Xu. See Xu Guangqi 徐光啓, *Lishu zong mubiao* 曆書總目表, in: *Xu Guangqi ji* 徐光啓集 (Shanghai, 1984 [1631]), vol. II (上冊), 373-374. In the late Ming, the Jesuits in Beijing and their patrons (such as Xu Guangqi) were well aware of the early Ming Persian-to-Chinese *Book on Heavenly Patterns* translation project. See Peter M. Engelfriet [1998], *Euclid in China: The Genesis of the First Chinese Translation of Euclid’s Elements, Books I-VI (Jihe yuanben [幾何原本]; Beijing, 1607) and its Reception up to 1723* (Leiden), 76.

¹⁴ In this sentence, 象 is the abbreviated form of 天象.

¹⁵ The formulation “*shun tianxin, li minming* 順天心，立民命” is referring to a dictum (itself building on earlier texts) of the Neo-Confucian Zhang Zai 張載 (1020-1077) from his treatise *Zheng meng* 正蒙 [*Correcting Ignorance*]: “為天地立心，為生民立命，為往聖繼絕學，為萬世開太平。” “Finding the purpose of Heaven and Earth; cultivating the populace according to the will (of Heaven); continuing the sciences of the sages of old; establishing peace for ten thousand generations.” Zhang Zai quoted in Li Zehou 李澤厚 (1991), *Zhongguo sixiangshi lun* 中國思想史論 [*Chinese Intellectual History*] (Anhui), 260.

¹⁶ For the title *lang* 郎, cf. Hucker, title no. 3563. *Lingtai lang* 靈臺郎, however, is conventionally rendered as “Director of the Imperial Observatory.” See Hucker, *Dictionary*, title 6220 (*Taishiyuan* 太史院).

¹⁷ Cf. HYDCD, def. 9 of altogether 13 (!), which is the only definition that makes sense here: “古时帝王观察天文星象、妖祥灾异的建筑。” It is probably the latter divinatory function that can explain the character *ling* 靈 (spirit, god) in the name of the building; or 靈 refers to sky, earth, sun and moon directly, as in its meaning “指天、地、日、月等尊称及物品名” (def. 15). The divinatory and ritual aspects notwithstanding, I translate *lingtai* conventionally as “Observatory.”

臣等奉命惟謹，開局於右順門之右，相與切摩，達厥本指，不敢有毫發增損。

I [Wu Bozong], your official, and the other [persons involved], received these orders and acted conscientiously. We established an office [for translation]¹⁸ at the right side of the Right Gate of Obedience, [where] we discussed things with each other, [so as to] convey [達] the original meaning [本指]. Neither did we dare to add the slightest bit [to the original text] nor to take the slightest bit away.

越明年二月，天文書譯既，善寫以進，有旨命臣伯宗爲序。

By the second month of the next year (1383), the translation of the *Book on Heavenly Patterns* (*Tianwenshu*) was finished, carefully written so that it could be offered [to the court]; there was an imperial decree, ordering me, Bozong, to write a preface for it.

臣聞伏羲畫八卦，唐堯欽曆象，大舜齊七政，神禹敘九疇，曆代相傳，載籍益備。

I, your official, have been told that [the mythical culture hero] Fuxi 伏羲 devised the eight divinatory diagrams [of the *Book of Changes*], that [the legendary] Emperor Yao (Tang Yao 唐堯) observed the celestial phenomena, the Great Shun 大舜 admired [齊]¹⁹ the Seven Sovereigns [七政, i.e. the seven visible celestial objects]²⁰, and the Divine Yu 神禹 ordered the Nine Divisions [of governance] [九疇]²¹. [This knowledge] was passed down from generation to generation²², recorded in books and brought to perfection over time.²³

其言天地之變化，陰陽之闔闢，日月星辰之運行，寒暑晝夜之代序，與夫人事吉凶，物理消長，微妙弘衍矣。今觀西域天文書，與中國所傳殊途同歸。則知至理精微之妙，充塞宇宙，豈以華夷而有間乎。

[The above-mentioned books] discuss changes in heaven and on earth, the opening and closing of *yin* and *yang*, the movements of the sun, the moon, and the stars, the alteration of the seasons, and again good or ill luck in human affairs, growth and decline in the structure of things [物理]²⁴, the subtle principles²⁵ in the vast variety [of phenomena]. Now, [if we] study the books on heavenly patterns from the Western Regions [and compare them to the books] that have been passed on in the Middle Kingdom, [we discover that] they took different paths but have arrived at the same destination [殊途同歸]. Therefore, we recognise the wonders of profundity and subtlety of the ultimate principle that permeate space and time —[and thus] how is there any difference between those called *hua* 華 (Chinese) and those called *yi* 夷 (Barbarians)?

恭維皇上心與天通，學稽古訓，一言一動，森若神明在上。

The heart-mind of His Glorious Imperial Majesty is in accord with Heaven. His knowledge extends even to the works of old. His words and actions are one and [His behaviour] is so awe-inspiring as if the gods were above Him.

¹⁸ 開局 means in this context to establish an office for compiling or editing (in this case: translation) work. Cf. HYDCD, s.v. 開局, def. 1: “旧指官府设立编写书籍的机构。”

¹⁹ The translation of 齊 as a verb is a bit difficult. Cf. HYDCD, def. 2: “古人在祭祀或其他典礼前整洁身心，以示庄敬。” See also the more general def. 1: “庄重; 严肃恭敬。”

²⁰ Sun 日, moon 月, Mercury 水, Venus 金, Mars 火, Jupiter 木, and Saturn 土, the most common ancient understanding of 七政 (HYDCD, def. 1). *Qi zheng* 七政 ‘the Seven Sovereigns’ is identical with *qi yao* 七曜 ‘the Seven Luminaries.’

²¹ Cf. HYDCD, def. 1: “疇，类。指传说中天帝赐给禹治理天下的九类大法，即《洛书》。”

²² Sic. The standard form would be 歷代.

²³ 備 apparently in the sense of 完備; and 益 in the sense of 更加.

²⁴ We should avoid to anachronistically translate *wuli* 物理 with the modern discipline name ‘physics.’

²⁵ *Weimiao* 微妙: cf. HYDCD, def. 3: “指精微深奥的道理。”

凡禮樂刑政，陽舒陰斂，皆法天而行。其於七曜順度，雨暘時若，以致隆平之治。
Everything connected to ceremonies, music, law, and governance, the emergence of the *yang* and the gathering of the *yin*, all [these manifold human affairs and natural phenomena must] in their behaviour follow the example of Heaven, so that the seven celestial bodies ‘follow the law’ [順度] and rain and sunshine appear at the right time. As a result, there will be prosperous and peaceful governance.

皇上敬天勤民，即伏羲堯舜禹之用心也。經傳所載，天人感應之理存於方寸，審矣。今又譯成此書，常留睿覽。

His Imperial Majesty venerates Heaven and serves the people just as diligently as Fuxi, Yao and Shun, and the Great Yu. He realised what is written down in the classics and commentaries, that the principles of stimulus and response [感應] between Heaven and Man exist [even in the smallest] *cun* square. Now, [the emperor not only studied Chinese works, but] also let this book be translated, which will always remain [in His palace, or generally: in existence] for imperial inspection.

兢兢戒慎，純亦不已，若是其至哉。

Prudent and self-critical, [the emperor] does not even stop [with his introspections] if he is [morally] pure. Thus, he ‘arrives’ (*zhi* 至²⁶) [at the ultimate goal of self-cultivation].²⁷

是書遠出夷裔，在元世百有餘年，晦而弗顯。今遇聖明，表而為中國之用，備一家之言，何其幸也。

This book comes from afar, from the remote barbarian regions, [it was written] in the Yuan era over one hundred years ago. It was hidden in the dark and did not appear. [But] now [the new dynasty] has come to a brilliant understanding and [this translation²⁸] is being [publicly] shown and put into the use of the Middle Kingdom. [It will] bring to perfection the theories of [one of our] schools [家].²⁹ This is truly a lucky event!

聖心廓焉大公，一視無間，超軼前代遠矣。刻而列之，與中國聖賢之書并傳并用。豈惟有補於當今，抑亦有功於萬世云。

The Emperor’s heart is great and impartial. Treating everybody the same way [一視無間] [not caring if a book on astronomy comes from China or Persia], he hugely surpasses former dynasties. [This translation will now be] printed and displayed, [so that it may be] handed down and used together with the books of the sages and virtuous men of the Middle Kingdom. This will be not only an enrichment for our times, but also a contribution for all ages!

洪武十六年五月辛亥翰林檢討臣吳伯宗謹序。

Respectfully written by Wu Bozong, Examining Editor [檢討]³⁰ of the Hanlin Academy, on a *xinhai*-day in the fifth month of the sixteenth year of the Hongwu era [9 June 1383].

²⁶ 至 in the sense of 知至.

²⁷ It is not quite clear if this sentence belongs thematically to the preceding or to the following paragraph.

²⁸ Here, the sentence must be referring back to “是書” to make sense.

²⁹ The word *jia* 家 refers to a ‘school’ in the sense of *Rujia* 儒家 (Confucianism), *Daojia* 道家 (Daoism), *Fojia* 佛家 (Buddhism), *Yinyangjia* 陰陽家. It might well point to the *yinyangjia*, which could refer to two different things: 1. astronomers, astrologers, and diviners in general; 2. specifically the branch of Warring States period philosophy that is known as the ‘School of Naturalists’ or ‘School of Yin-yang’ with Zou Yan 鄒衍 (305-240 BC) as founding figure.

³⁰ Cf. Hucker, title. no. 868.

2. Ma Hama (Muḥammad): *Book on Heavenly Patterns* paratext³¹

天理無象，其生人也，恩厚無窮。人之感恩而報天也，心亦罔極。

The principles of Heaven have no concrete image. They give birth to Man. [Heaven's] benevolence is profound and inexhaustible. Man conducts sacrifices to Heaven with a heart endlessly grateful.³²

然而大道在天地間茫昧無聞，必有聰明睿智聖人者出，心得神會斯道之妙，立教於當世。後之賢者接踵相承，又得上古聖人所傳之妙，以垂教於來世也。

However, the Great Way [大道] lies secret and concealed between Heaven and Earth. Intelligent, wise sages had to appear, coming to understanding through study and truly comprehending [神會] the subtlety [妙] of the Way, to establish this teaching in the present age. Later sages followed one after the other and continued the work. They received the wisdom [妙] that had been passed on by the saints of old and gave it to posterity.

聖人馬哈麻及後賢輩出，有功於大道者昭然可考。逮闢識牙耳大賢者生，闡揚至理，作為此書，極其精妙。

[Since the time of the] saint Muhammad (*Mahama* 馬哈麻)³³ [there were] countless generations of later sages who contributed to the Great Way and are clearly traceable [in historical records]. Eventually, the great sage Kuoshiya'er 闢識牙耳 ['Kushyar,' i.e. Kushyar ibn Labban 庫希亞爾 بن لَبَّان] was born. [He] expounded these profound truths and wrote them down in this book [which] has reached extreme subtleness.

後人信守尊崇，縱有明智不能加規而過矩也。

Later generations [will] be faithful to [信守] [his writings] and respect [them]. Even wise [men] will not be able to add a single regulation or break a single rule [of the knowledge in the translated *Book on Heavenly Patterns*].

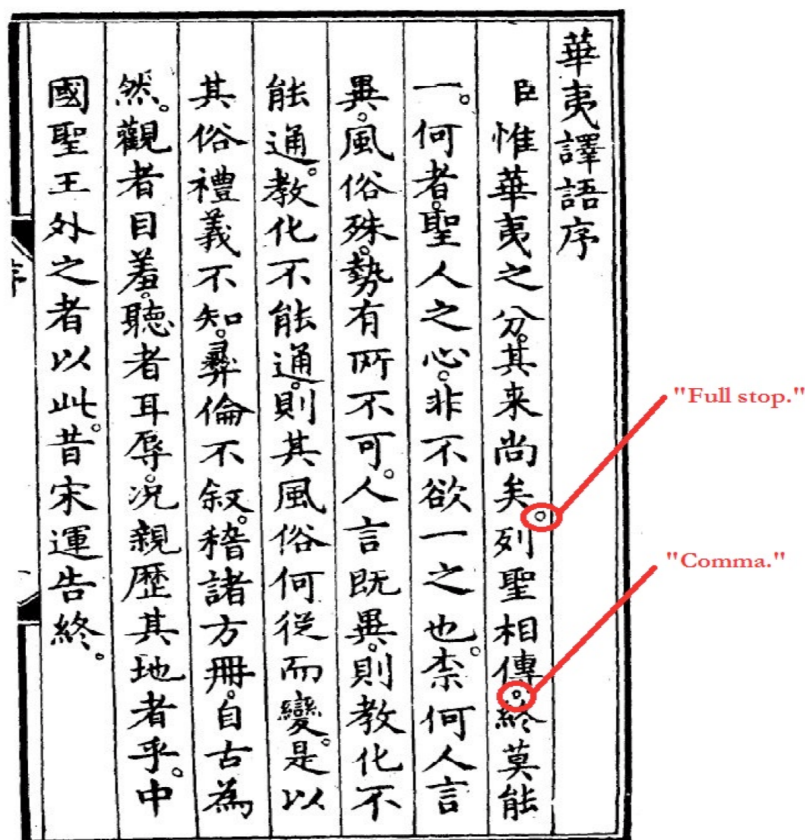
³¹ Source: Ma Hama (1996 [1383?]), *Tianwen shu xu* 譯天文書序 [(Unsigned) Preface to the Translated (Persian) 'Book on Astronomy'], in Ma 馬 & Chen 陳, *Zhongguo huihui lifa jicong* 中國回回曆法輯叢, 3. I adopt Ma Mingda's punctuation, with some modifications. This is the only early Ming preface written by one of the 'proper' translators, i.e., the bilingual foreigners. In contrast, Wu Bozong and Liu Sanwu are, by all appearances, native Chinese monolingual officials. The preface is unsigned and undated. However, in the copies *Qianfang mishu* 乾方秘書 and *Tianwen xiang zong xi zhan* 天文象宗西占 this preface is referred to as "Preface by Ma Hama who translated scriptures from the Western Regions" [馬哈麻譯西域經書序]. See Ma Mingda & Chen Jing, *Zhongguo huihui lifa jicong*, 3 note 1.

³² 罔極 is apparently pointing to a sentiment of filial piety towards Heaven.

³³ The name *Mahama* 馬哈麻 refers at this point *not* to the translator Ma Hama, who would certainly not call himself a saint, but to the historical Muhammad (c.570-632).

3. Liu Sanwu: *Sino-Barbarian Translations* paratext (1389)³⁴

Note — I adopt the original punctuation from the Ming Palace edition (although, occasionally, it seems a bit peculiar and does not always correspond to my translation), transcribing the small circles at the right side of characters as modern Chinese full stops (。) and the small circles ‘between’ characters as modern Chinese regular commas (，). See the facsimile of the first preface page below.



華夷譯語序

Preface to the Sino-Barbarian Translations and Transcriptions

臣惟華夷之分，其來尚矣。列聖相傳，終莫能一。

Your Servant thinks that the divide between ‘Chinese’ (*Hua* 華) and ‘barbarians’ (*yi* 夷) has a very long history. Virtuous rulers have handed down [this divide] through generations. [However,] in the end none of them has been able to unify them.

何者，聖人之心，非不欲一之也。奈何人言異，風俗殊，勢有所不可。

Why is it thus? It was not that the sages did not feel the desire in their hearts to unify them [Chinese and barbarians]. [But] what could be done given that people spoke different languages? When customs differ, nothing can be achieved.

³⁴ Liu Sanwu 劉三吾 (1389), “Huayi yiyu xu 華夷譯語序” [Preface to the Chinese-Barbarian Translations and Transliterations], in: Huo Yuanjie 火原潔 & Ma Shayihei 馬沙衣黑 (1971 [1389]), *Huayi yiyu*, facsimile of the Ming print, edited by Wang Yunwu 王雲五 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館), 1-5.

人言即異，則教化不能通。教化不能通，則其風俗何從而變。是以前其俗禮義不知，彝倫不敘。稽諸方冊，自古爲然。觀者目羞，聽者耳辱，況親歷其地者乎。中國聖王外之者以此。

If people speak different languages, civilisation [教化] cannot be communicated. If civilisation cannot be communicated, how can their [barbarian] customs be changed? Consequently, their customs are such that rites and morality are unknown and human relationships are not regulated. Studying the classical writings, we find that it was always like that, embarrassing the eye of the beholder and insulting the listener's ear. Moreover, what about those who have personally passed through their territories? [I.e., their experiences reinforce the overall negative image.] This is why the sage rulers of the Middle Kingdom keep them outside.

昔宋運告終。天命元君，入主中國。其俗專騎射，尚殺伐。素無文字。以發號施令，非文字不傳。故借高昌之書爲本俗之典。

Some time ago, the Song Dynasty came to an end and Heaven chose the Yuan rulers to enter and rule the Middle Kingdom. Their way of life [俗] consisted exclusively of riding and arrow shooting and they held war [殺伐, lit. 'attacking and killing'] in high esteem. They did originally not have a script and issued their orders through verbal commands. [However,] since they could not pass down [their orders] without a script, they borrowed the Uyghur characters [高昌之書] and used them for their own decrees and regulations.

厥後復令番僧造蒙古字。聲教內外，意皆不足。然其恩威法令，終夫九十三年，惟華言是從。而書獨異者其猜防之心有在也。

Later again, a foreign monk [Drogön Chögyal Phagpa?] was ordered to create a Mongolian script [蒙古字] [i.e. not the Mongolian script proper, but Phagspa script].³⁵ Regarding the sound [of proclamations in that script], they were valid universally; [however, as for their] meaning they were all inadequate.³⁶ For the whole ninety-three years [that the Yuan lasted, according to Liu] all their gracious and powerful laws and commands employed Chinese language [華言], only the script was different. This was a cause for wariness and distrust.³⁷

欽惟皇上，受天明命。君主華夷。邇來四海一家。胡人悉附。

[Your servant] respectfully thinks that when His Imperial Majesty received the explicit mandate of heaven [to be] sovereign over Chinese and barbarians alike and the four oceans became one family ever since, the barbarians (*huren* 胡人) have all submitted [to the Ming].

³⁵ It is not always clear at first glance if Liu refers to the Uyghur script, the Phagspa script or to the Mongolian script proper. When he states that the Mongols “borrowed the Uyghur characters and used them for their own decrees and regulations” [借高昌之書爲本俗之典] he probably refers to the classical Mongolian script proper, i.e. “borrowing” [借] is to be understood as “adapting,” since the Mongolian script is indeed derived directly from the Old Uyghur script. (See Michael C. Brose [2005], “Uyghur Technologists of Writing and Literacy in Mongol China,” *T'oung Pao* 91, 396-435.) Then again, when Liu says that “a foreign monk was ordered to create a Mongolian script” [令番僧造蒙古字], he does not refer to the Mongolian script proper, but to the ‘international’ Phagspa script (see Chapter Two). Note that Phagspa Chinese is the earliest form of Chinese to be written in a systematically devised alphabetic script (c. 650 years before Pinyin and some centuries before the Jesuits conceived the first transliterations into Latin script). When Liu notices that “for the whole ninety-three years [that the Yuan Dynasty lasted] all their gracious and powerful laws and commands employed Chinese language, only the script was different” [其恩威法令，終夫九十三年，惟華言是從，而書獨異者] and adds that this was “a cause for wariness and distrust” [猜防之心有在] (amongst the Chinese!) he must be speaking about Chinese-language texts written in Phagspa script.

³⁶ What does this mean? It seems our author wants to criticise the idea of an universal script (Phagspa).

³⁷ A punctuation better corresponding to my translation would be:

然其恩威法令，終夫九十三年，惟華言是從，而書獨異者，其猜防之心有在也。

思夫天生兆民。立之君師。有教無類。教之者必始于通言語。通其言語，非變更其書不可。以其書一字數母。反復紐切。然後成文。繁複爲甚。

In my opinion, [since] Heaven brought forth the multitudes of people and established rulers and teachers for them, there [should be] no distinction between classes in education [有教無類].³⁸ The one who wants to educate [教] them must at first understand their languages. Understanding their languages will not be possible without transforming their script. Their [Mongolian] script uses many letters [母] for each word [字], again and again you have to join them and tear them apart until a text is produced. How extremely complicated!

顧以中國無窮之字，全備之音，豈不足以譯之。第未得兼通者耳。

Considering China's infinite characters and completely sufficient [inventory of] sounds, how could we not be able to translate [Mongolian words]? Only there had not yet been somebody who was proficient in both [languages]!

翰林侍講臣火源潔乃朔漠之族。生於華夏。本俗之文，與肩者罕。志通中國四書。咸明其意。遂命以華文，譯胡語。

The official Huo Yuanjie, Expositor-in-waiting at the Hanlin Academy, stems from the desert people [but] was born in China (*Huaxia* 華夏). As regards the literature of his [Mongolian] tradition, few can compare to him. He devotes himself to studying the *Four Books* of the Middle Kingdom and has clearly understood the meaning of them all. Thus, he was ordered to translate the barbarian language [i.e. Mongolian] into Chinese script.

三五堆垛而其字始全。該對訓釋而其義始明。聲音和諧，隨用各足。俾輯錄刊布焉。

Heaps [of characters] [he] piled up three or five times until they were complete and [he] had to compare and explain their meanings until they were clear. As the sounds and pronunciations became harmonious, finally all [words] could be used satisfyingly and [there was an imperial] order to collect and edit, print and distribute them.

臣惟五方之人，言語不通。嗜慾亦異。故成周有象胥之官，以達彼此之情。方今天下同文同軌。皇上推一視同仁之心，經營是書，以通言語，以達志意。將見禮樂教化四達而不悖，則用夏變夷之道，端在是矣。豈曰小補之哉。

Your Servant thinks: the people of the five cardinal directions cannot mutually understand their languages and have different desires as well. Therefore, [already] when the Zhou Dynasty was established, there were interpreter-officials [象胥之官], able to communicate each party's intentions. In the present time, with all-under-heaven using the same script [同文] and the same gauge [同軌], the Emperor promotes [推] the thought [心] of treating everybody with the same kind of benevolence. [Thus,] he planned and prepared this book, in order that languages can be mutually understood [通言語] and intentions and desires can be expressed. When ritual, music [禮樂] and civilisation [spread] into all directions [四達] without being impeded [不悖], we embark upon that path on which China (*Xia* 夏) will change the barbarians [變夷]. That is the purpose [of this endeavour]. Indeed, it cannot be called a trifle [小補]!

洪武二十二年。冬十月十五日。翰林學士奉議大夫兼左春坊左贊善臣劉三吾謹序。

Respectfully written by the official Liu Sanwu, Hanlin scholar, Grand Master for Consultation [奉議大夫] and *zuochunfang zuozanshan* 左春坊左贊善 [apparently some 'obscure' title], on the fifteenth day in the tenth winter month of the twenty-second year of Hongwu [3 November 1389].

³⁸ This sound fairly 'modern' but the slogan 有教無類 is classical, appearing already in the Analects of Confucius.

4. Zhengtong edict relating to the *Bureau of Translators* (1444)³⁹

Note — This source is significant, as it gives a clearer idea of how the *Hanlin Academy* and the *Bureau of Translators* were actually connected.

正統九年六月十八日奉。

Issued on the eighteenth day of the sixth month in the ninth year of the Zhengtong era [3 July 1444].

聖諭，朝廷懷撫四彝。因其言語文字不通，所以授譯字官以達其情。

Imperial edict: The imperial court pacifies the barbarians from the four cardinal points. Because their spoken languages and scripts can not be understood, translator-officials (*yizi guan* 譯字官) are appointed to get their interests across.

此先選監生、官民家子弟。習學有成效的，都與他職事。

In the beginning, [students for the *Siyi guan*] were chosen from among the students of the *Directorate of Education* (*Guozijian*) and from among the offspring of both official and commoners' families. Those who studied successfully, were given an official post.

近聞有等不遵禮法之徒，全不用心習學，惟務出外遊蕩，甚至抗拒師長，不服教訓；歷年已久，學無進益，好生怠慢廢弛。

[We have] recently heard that there are [among the students] a number of persons who do not abide by the rites and regulations, who do not at all diligently study, who do only engage in going out [for amusement] and are idly loitering around, [this behaviour going] even to the point of resisting [their] teachers and not complying when they are being reprimanded. Over the past years there has been no progress in studying; [students are] really idle, wanton and negligent.

今著，寺副姚本、主事于禮、提督同教師，每專心訓誨。敢有仍蹈前非的，提督官同教師責罰記過，屢犯不悛的，具奏處治。

Now [We] stipulate that the *sifu* 寺副⁴⁰ Yao Ben 姚本, the Secretary⁴¹ Yu Li 于禮, the Superintendent (*Tidu* 提督⁴²) [of the *Bureau of Translators*] and the [language] instructors⁴³ [should] always conscientiously guide [the students]. Those who still dare to carry on with their former nonconformity [will be treated as follows]: the Superintendent and the instructors will punish [them] and keep a record of [their] demerits; [about] those who repeatedly commit offences and do not repent a memorial [will be] sent to the throne and [they will be] penalised.

³⁹ *Regulations for the Bureau of Translators*, Two imperial edicts 勅諭二道, Edict I (1444).

⁴⁰ There are two official posts named *sifu*, rank 6b, at the *Court of Judicial Review* (*Dali si* 大理寺). However, it would be new to me (and, in any case, a bit surprising to learn) that the *Dali si* is in any form connected to the *Bureau of Translators*. I suspect that the *sifu*-title refers to another *si* 寺, namely the *Taichang si* 太常寺, or *Court of Imperial Sacrifices*, a connection that would be more likely due to the ritual aspects in the reception of foreign embassies.

⁴¹ For the title Secretary (*Zhushi* 主事), see Hucker (1985), *Dictionary*, title no. 1420.

⁴² Hucker translates 提督 as 'Superintendent.' See Hucker, *Dictionary*, title no. 5656 (四譯館). See also title no. 6491 (提督四夷館), Ming: "Superintendent of the Translators Institute, concurrent assignment for a Vice Minister (少卿) of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices (太常寺)."

⁴³ We encounter three very similar combinations in this and the following paragraph: A. 提督同教師, B. 提督官同教師, C. 提督官教師. The meanings are identical: "the Superintendent (of the *Siyi guan*) and the (language) instructors." The character 官 'official' after the title 提督 is optional and does not change the meaning of the expression as a whole. 同 should be understood as a grammatical conjunction ('and') which can be omitted as in C.

翰林院堂上官時常點閱、考校務，求成效，以資任使。提督官教師不許縱容怠慢。習字官子弟人等，果有愚頑不知改悔不堪教訓的來說，黜退他；已除官的，待考滿時，還着實考他，以憑黜陟。

The high officials of the *Hanlin Academy* [must] frequently make an inventory [of the *Bureau*] and examine its educational work⁴⁴, in order to strive for efficiency; depending on [their investigations], they should advance the students to [appropriate] posts. The Superintendent and the teachers are not allowed to tolerate idleness and wantonness. If there are among the translator-students and juniors persons that are ignorant and stubborn, unable to recognise their mistakes [and/or] not willing to accept reprimands, they have to be relieved from their posts. [As regards] those who are already dismissed from an office, wait until they have taken their regular examinations [考滿時], then examine them thoroughly again, and let their dismissal or promotion to a higher office depend on [the examination results].⁴⁵

欽此。

Respect this.

⁴⁴ Cf. HYDCD, s.v. 校務: 1. 泛指学校事务 (the affairs of a school in general), 2. 学校教育事务 (the educational work of a school in particular). Both meanings would work here.

⁴⁵ This sentence suggests that the students in question are *only* dismissed from a certain office which they hold as a *concurrent* post while studying at the *Bureau of Translators*—but *not* discharged as students of the *Bureau*.

5. Persian termini in the *Islamic Astronomy* translation⁴⁶

Note — From the following passage we can infer that the source text must have been composed in Persian: the transliterated terms are specifically Persian and not Arabic. This version is from the *Ming History*, which was compiled in the Qing; the translation itself is from the 1380s of the early Ming.

釋月分大小及本音名號。

Explanation of the big and small months and their names in the original language.

第一月大，名法而幹兒丁。第二月小，名阿而的比喜世。第三月大，名虎而達。第四月小，名提而。第五月大，名木而達。第六月小，名沙哈列幹而。第七月大，名列黑而。第八月小，名阿斑。第九月大，名阿咱而。第十月小，名答亦。十一月大，名八哈慢。十二月小，名亦思番達而麻的。(…)

The first month is big and called *Farwording* 法兒幹兒丁 [*Farvardīn* فروردین].

The second month is small and called *Ardibixishi* 兒的比喜世 [*Ordibehesht* اردیبهشت].

The third month is small and called *Hurda* 虎而達 [*Xordād* خرداد].

The fourth month is small and called *Tir* 提而 [*Tīr* تیر].

The fifth month is small and called *Murda* 木而達 [*Mordād* مرداد].

The sixth month is small and called *Shahaliewor* 沙哈列幹而 [*Shahrivar* شهریور].

The seventh month is small and called *Liehei'r* 列黑而.⁴⁷

The eighth month is small and called *Aban* 阿斑 [*Ābān* آبان].

The ninth month is small and called *Azar* 阿咱而 [*Āzar* آذر].

The tenth month is small and called *Dayi* 答亦 [*Dey* دی].

The eleventh month is small and called *Bahaman* 八哈慢 [*Bahman* بهمن].

The twelfth month is small and called *Yisifandarmadi* 亦思番達而麻的.⁴⁸

釋七曜數及本音名號。

Explanation of the seven days of the week and their names in the original language.

日一數，名也閃別。月二數，名都閃別。火三數，名寫閃別。水四數，名察而閃別。木五數，名盤閃別。金六數，名阿的那。土七數，名闕閃別。

The first day is of the sun [lat. *dies Solis*] and called *Yeshanbie* 也閃別 [*yek-shanbe* یکشنبه].

The second day is of the moon [*dies Lunae*], called *Dushanbie* 都閃別 [*do-shanbe* دوشنبه].

The third day is of Mars [*dies Martis*]⁴⁹ and called *Xieshanbie* 寫閃別 [*se-shanbe* سهشنبه].

The 4th day is of Mercury [*d. Mercurii*], *Cha'ershanbie* 察而閃別 [*chahār-shanbe* چهارشنبه].

The fifth day is of Jupiter [*dies Jovi*] and called *Panshanbie* 盤閃別 [*panj-shanbe* پنجشنبه].

The sixth day is of Venus [lat. *dies Veneris*] and called *Adina* 阿的那 [*ādīneh* آدینه].

The seventh day is of Saturn [lat. *dies Saturni*] and called *Queshanbie* 闕閃別.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Ma Shaiyhei 馬沙衣黑 et al. (authors/translators) & Bei Lin 貝琳 (ed.), *Qizheng tuibu* 七政推步 (1477), in Ma 馬 & Chen 陳, *Zhongguo huihui lifa jicong* 中國回回曆法輯叢, 516.

⁴⁷ The seventh month should be *Mehr* (مهر), therefore the Chinese transcription *Liehei'r* 列黑而 seems odd. It would make sense if the first character was pronounced *mie* instead of *lie*: *Miehei'r* = *Mehr*.

⁴⁸ In modern Persian, the last month would just be *Esfand* (اسفند) = *Yisifanda* 亦思番達.

⁴⁹ Liu Yingsheng (2002), “Government-Sponsored Persian Education in China between the 13th and the 18th Centuries,” in *Iran: Questions et connaissances*, vol. 2, ed. *Congrès européen des études iraniennes* (Paris et al.), 267-284, commenting on this passage, has translated 火, 水, 木, etc., as “fire,” “water,” “wood,” etc., as if the five “elements” (*wu xing* 五行) were meant in the literal sense. This might not be an ideal translation, as the text clearly refers to planets: the sequence of the seven luminaries (sun, moon, five planets of antiquity) corresponds to the Graeco-Roman tradition of naming the seven days of the week. I add the Latin termini in brackets for clarification.

⁵⁰ In modern Persian, it would be only *shanbe* 閃別, i.e. *shanbe* شنبه.

6. Genealogy of the Family Ma from the Juzhen Studio⁵¹

[Part I]

我馬氏來華源流 How our family Ma came to China

我馬氏者，原系阿拉伯清真嫡派。

Our family Ma hails originally from an Arabic [阿拉伯] Muslim [清真] line of descent.

自明太祖平定中華，於洪武三年為創立政府，成立欽天監，派欽使到阿拉伯滿凱政府，聘請精於曆學專家，乃聘到準帶地方古來氏族學者，即我來華氏族德魯丁公字彥明者。

After the Great Ancestor of the Ming (Hongwu) pacified China and founded a new government in the third year of his reign (1370), the Astronomical Bureau (*Qintianjian* 欽天監) was set up and Imperial envoys were sent to the government [of the city of] *Mankai* 滿凱 [Mecca?] in Arabia. [The envoys] offered posts [in China] to the [local] experts in astronomy.⁵² Eventually, [they] engaged a scholar of the Gulai 古來 family [who lived in the] *Zhundai* 準帶 [Jeddah?] area, namely the Honourable (*gong* 公)⁵³ Deluding 德魯丁 of our family, courtesy name (*zi* 字) Yanming 彥明, who [subsequently] came to China.

於洪武二年來至江蘇省江寧縣。

In the second year of the Hongwu era (1369)⁵⁴, [Ma Deluding] came to the county of Jiangning 江寧 [Nanjing]⁵⁵ in the province Jiangsu 江蘇.

⁵¹ Anonymous (1996 [1928?]), *Juzhen tang Ma Shi zongpu* 聚真堂馬氏宗譜 [*The Genealogy of the Family Ma from the Juzhen Studio*], Republican Era version reprinted in Ma & Chen, *Zhongguo huihui lifa jicong*, 1025-1026. I adopt Ma Mingda's punctuation, with some modifications.

⁵² 精於曆學專家 are literally “the experts who were good at astronomy” (the phrasing sounds tautological only in English). 精於曆學 is an attribute of 專家.

⁵³ In antiquity, *gong* 公 was the highest title of nobility (*jue* 爵) after *wang* 王 ‘King’ and is conventionally rendered in English as ‘Duke.’ In the Tang Dynasty (618-907), *gong* still denoted a member of a ‘real’ feudal-like nobility with land grants for support, but from the Song Dynasty (960-1279) onwards became an honorary status conferred on distinguished military officers and eminent civil officials. At some point, *gong* acquired the additional meaning of ‘The Honorable’ or ‘His Honor,’ independent of any feudal background or honorary status, “a polite term of indirect address applied to someone considered deserving of respect, used either alone or as a suffix appended to the surname, e.g., Li-kung 李公 (the Honorable Li; His Honor Li)” (Hucker [1985], *Dictionary*, title no. 3388). It should be noted that the present source appends the term *gong* not to the surname but to the given name; using the surname would make the text unintelligible. Naturally, we can distinguish the *dramatis personae* of a *zongpu* only by referring to their given names. In conclusion, I doubt that a ‘real’ title (Duke) is meant but future research might prove otherwise. I use, for now, “the Honourable” as a conventional rendering of *gong*.

⁵⁴ One of many contradictions with dates and causality: the envoys were supposedly sent after 1370, and as a consequence Deluding came to China in 1369.

⁵⁵ Note that (1) the ancient Jiangning 江寧 (better known as Jiankang 建康) was a city in the vicinity of modern Nanjing and capital of the Eastern Jin 東晉 (317-420); (2) Nanjing was called Jiangning during some periods of the Tang and during the Northern Song (and, again, later in the Qing); (3) a modern district of Nanjing is called *Jiangning qu* 江寧區. The tomb of Zheng He is located in the Jiangning district—as well as the Yangshan Quarry (*Yangshan bei cai* 陽山碑材) with the unfinished giant stele from the era of ‘Yongle grandeur.’

明朝之南京成立欽天監，授欽天監監正。

The Nanjing of the Ming Dynasty established the Astronomical Bureau and awarded the title of Astronomical Bureau Director (*Qintianjian jianzheng* 欽天監監正) [on Ma Deluding].

帶來隨員甚多，皆分任欽天監職務。

[Ma Deluding] brought with him numerous companions. They all individually held a post at the Astronomical Bureau.

明太祖封我祖如師，並以我族長子沙亦黑公字仲德，招為駙馬，賜配十三公主，因馬皇后外家姓也。

The Great Ancestor of the Ming conferred [the title of] ‘Master’ (*Shi* 師) upon our ancestor [Ma Deluding]. Moreover, he made the eldest son of our family, the Honourable Shayihe 沙亦黑, courtesy name Zhongde 仲德, his son-in-law [駙馬] and the husband of his thirteenth princess, because [Ma] was Empress Ma’s maiden name.

因我祖執掌欽天監，有測天文之學，皆稱為大測先生。後蒙賜我馬氏大測堂號。

Since our ancestor was in charge of the Astronomical Bureau and possessed knowledge about how to observe the heavenly patterns, everybody called him ‘Mr Great Observer’ (*Dace xiansheng* 大測先生). Later, the ‘hall name’⁵⁶ ‘Hall of the Great Observer’ (*Dace tang* 大測堂) was graciously bestowed upon our household Ma.⁵⁷

[Part II]

我二世祖共分三支。長子馬沙亦黑公，字仲德，乃北方馬氏祖也。江南南京二支祖馬哈麻公，字仲良。浙江紹興三支祖馬哈沙公，字仲義。此我南方同祖馬氏祖也。

The second generation of our ancestors can be divided into three branches. The oldest son, the Honourable Ma Shayihe, courtesy name Zhongde, is the ancestor of the Northern Ma family [i.e. the first branch]. Ancestor of the second branch [from] Nanjing in the Jiangnan region⁵⁸, [is] the Honourable Ma Hama 馬哈麻, courtesy name Zhongliang 仲良. Ancestor of the third branch, [from] Shaoxing in Zhejiang province, [is] the Honourable Ma Hasha 馬哈沙, courtesy name Zhongyi 仲義. Thus, [Ma Hama and Ma Hasha] are the ancestors of the Southern branch of the family Ma.

馬氏長子北遷源流

Origin and development of the northwards migration of the Ma family’s eldest son

我北方馬氏祖馬沙亦黑公，字仲德，即良之祖，乃明太祖駙馬。

Our ancestor of the Northern Ma family, the Honourable Ma Shayihe, courtesy name Zhongde, was the ancestor of [Ma] Liang 馬良⁵⁹; he was actually the son-in-law of the Great Ancestor of the Ming.

⁵⁶ 堂號, i.e. household name, specific lineage name.

⁵⁷ See Wilkinson, 100, for meaning of 堂.

⁵⁸ Jiangnan 江南 refers to the area immediately south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River (Changjiang 長江). Historically significant cities in Jiangnan are Nanjing, Hangzhou, Suzhou, Changzhou, Ningbo, Shanghai, Wuxi, and Shaoxing.

⁵⁹ In the seventeenth year of the Republic of China (1928), the Ma family descendant Ma Liang 馬良 et al. compiled the genealogy *Juzhen tang Ma Shi zongpu* 聚貞堂馬氏宗譜 [The Ma Family Tree from *Juzhen tang*], the current source.

繼我始祖襲封欽天監監正，兼四夷館教習。

Our primal ancestor [Ma Deluding] then passed his posts of Astronomical Bureau Director and instructor [教習]⁶⁰ at the *Bureau of Translators* (*Siyi guan* 四夷館) on [to Ma Shayihe].

於永樂四年欽天監遷移北京，而來至北方，賜北京西域磚塔胡同地方，為駙馬府。

When the Astronomical Bureau moved to Beijing in the fourth year of Yongle (1406), [Ma Shayihe also] went to the North. *Zhuanta Hutong* 磚塔胡同 (lit. Brick Pagoda Lane) in the quarters [for people from the] Western Regions in Beijing was bestowed upon him as ‘Seat of the Emperor’s son-in-law’ [駙馬府].

在永樂朝亦封為回回大師。著作《天文書》，亦翻譯元朝天文書多種。其所著譯之書皆在《四庫全書》內。馬沙亦黑著作者，即我祖也。

In the Yongle period, [the title] ‘Great Muslim Master’ (*Huihui Dashi* 回回大師) was again [亦] conferred upon him. He authored the *Book on Heavenly Patterns* (*Tianwen shu* 天文書) and translated various astronomical books from the Yuan Dynasty. The books that he wrote and translated are all contained in the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (*Complete Library of the Four Branches of Learning*).⁶¹ Ma Shayihe, the author, is our ancestor.

當仲德公秋高之際，因告老休養，嚴行教條，專作清廉五功。

When the Honourable Zhongde (Ma Shayihe), ‘in the autumn of his life’ [秋高之際], resigned from his post, [in order to] retire, he strictly followed his creed and devoted himself to ‘the five achievements of honesty and uprightness’ [清廉五功].⁶²

見我馬氏族大人多，乃為回避北京繁華之區。在保陽徐水縣，燕南趙北之間，購地建築馬家寨，規模宏大，其狀如城。

Because [Ma Shayihe] saw that our Ma family grew larger and larger, he moved away from the bustling region of Beijing.⁶³ At Baoyang 保陽 in Xushui county 徐水縣 [in Hebei], south of Yan 燕 and north of Zhao 趙⁶⁴, he bought a piece of land and built the ‘Ma village’ (*Majia zhai* 馬家寨), which had the imposing dimensions of a city.

一世祖，諱德魯丁公，字彥明。

The name of the deceased family head [諱] of the first generation is: Honourable Deluding, his courtesy name is Yanming.

⁶⁰ *Jiaoxi* 教習 in this context should be understood as ‘teacher, instructor.’ It is even listed as a specific Ming era title in the *Jian Ming lishi cidian* 簡明历史辞典 [*Concise Historical Dictionary*], s.v. 教習.

⁶¹ Compiled 1773-1782 under Qianlong

⁶² *Qinglian wu gong* 清廉五功 can only refer to the “five pillars of Islam”: *Shahadah* (declaring that there is no god except God), *Salat* (ritual prayer five times a day), *Sawm* (fasting during Ramadan), *Zakat* (giving 2.5% of one’s savings to the poor), and *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca).

⁶³ “—and took his whole family with him,” is apparently implied.

⁶⁴ Yan 燕 and Zhao 趙 are names of ancient Chinese states of the pre-Qin (221-206 BC) era. The capital of the state of Yan was Yanjing in the area of modern Beijing. Xushui county is around 75 miles southwest of modern Beijing’s centre.

[Part III]

自明洪武二年來華，當時隨從人員甚多。有以不拉金，即金姓之祖。以思哈格，即哈姓之祖。爾不都拉，即吳姓之祖。并有其他，如趙姓諸族，共有九姓。人呼彥明公為九姓公。

In the second year of the Hongwu era (1369), [Ma Deluding] came to China, together with a large staff of people accompanying him. There was Yibulajin 以不拉金, who is the ancestor of those with the family name Jin 金. [There was] Yisihage 以思哈格, who is the ancestor of those with the family name Ha 哈. [There was] Erbudula 爾不都拉 [Abdullah عبد الله], who is the ancestor of those with the family name Wu 吳. And there are others, for example Zhao 趙 which is the name of various families. Altogether there are nine family names. People called the Honourable Yan Ming (i.e. Ma Deluding) ‘Jiuxing Gong 九姓公 [lit. *Sir Nine Family Names*].’

彥明公，本阿拉伯準帶地方清真嫡派，古來氏族，在滿凱南百二十里，精通曆學者。The Honourable Yan Ming [Ma Deluding] [hailed] originally from the Zhundai [Jeddah?] area in Arabia and from a Muslim line of descent, [namely] from the Gulai family [who lived] 120 *li* south of Mankai [Mecca?].⁶⁵ He was proficient in astronomy.

聘入中華，授職欽天監監正。明太祖尊我祖如師，晉封回回太師。因國勢初定，關於建設，多所顧問，而言聽計從，大為劉基所忌。

[Ma Deluding] entered China [because he] had been recruited. [He was] awarded the post of Astronomical Bureau Director. The Great Ancestor of the Ming honoured our ancestor [with the title] ‘Teacher’ (*Shi* 師) and conferred the additional title ‘Muslim Grand Tutor’ (*Huihui Taishi* 回回太師) upon him.⁶⁶ Since the new dynasty had just been established, [Ma Deluding] gave a lot of advice regarding this founding [period]. [The emperor] followed [Ma’s] advice confidently, [therefore Ma] was greatly envied by Liu Ji 劉基 [another major advisor].⁶⁷

洪武五年，偕哈沙公乞假回祖國，朝天房。七年始返中華。我始祖自西方回華，因年高在途風霜所苦致病。

In the fifth year of the Hongwu era (1372), [Ma Deluding] requested [that he might be allowed] to return to the land of his ancestors and make a pilgrimage to Arabia [超天房⁶⁸] in the company of the Honourable [Ma] Hasha. At the beginning of the seventh year [of Hongwu, i.e. 1374], he returned to China. Since our primal ancestor [Ma Deluding] had already reached old age when he returned from the West to China (*Hua* 華), he suffered much from wind and frost on the road back and fell ill.

⁶⁵ The *li* 里 has varied considerably over time; today it has a standardised length of 500m. If Mankai 滿凱 is indeed Mecca and if Zhundai 準帶 is indeed the port city Jeddah, the indication “120 *li* [60km] south of Mankai” does make sense, only the cardinal direction is wrong. Jeddah is indeed around 65km away from Mecca (but, of course, not to the South but to the West). Interestingly, Ma Huan’s description is also a bit confused: according to him, if you travel westwards for one day from Jeddah, you reach Mecca (which is true, except that you ride eastwards not westwards).

⁶⁶ Note that sometimes the title is given as 回回大師, sometimes as 回回太師.

⁶⁷ Liu Ji 劉基 or Liu Bowen 劉伯溫 (1311-1375) was a general under Hongwu, with a reputation of military genius. A scholar and ‘prophet’ (the ‘Chinese Nostradamus’), he was main advisor to Zhu Yuanzhang (Hongwu) while Zhu was still a rebel leader in Mongol China. In the early Ming, he was still one of Hongwu’s most trusted men but the relationship deteriorated: Liu was ejected from office in 1375 since Hongwu was convinced that Liu was plotting against him.

⁶⁸ Sic. Arabia is usually written 天方, not 天房.

明太祖躬親視疾，知將不起，問曰，卿如千秋後，朕將何以為酬。乃乞太祖，賜給雨花臺山水為臣馬回回安葬之地。

The Great Ancestor of the Ming personally visited the sick man, realised that he could not be healed, and asked him: “When the ‘thousand autumns’ [千秋, i.e. life] of my official will be over, how can We give you something in return?” [Ma Deluding] begged the Great Ancestor, “Bestow the hill [called] Rain Flower Terrace (*Yuhuatai* 雨花臺)⁶⁹ upon Your servant ‘Ma the Muslim’ (Ma Huihui 馬回回) as his burial ground.”

其所以自稱為《馬回回》者，是我始祖撇去今世富貴，歸回真主之義也。

Our primal ancestor called himself ‘Ma the Muslim’ because he forsook wealth and rank of this mortal world and gave himself over to the justice of God [真主].

殯葬之日，太祖親身步行，送至墳墓。大悲，哭泣之哀，顏色之戚，達於極點。并曰：“此天喪我右臂助也！”此語南京人至今知者甚多，傳至今日約六百年。

At the day of the funeral, the Great Ancestor [the Hongwu emperor] personally accompanied [the funeral procession], walking on foot [!] until they reached the tomb. Great was [the emperor’s] grief and tearful his moaning, his sadness had reached an extreme point. [The emperor] said: “Heaven took my ‘right helping arm’!” Up until the present day there are many people of Nanjing who can remember these words, [although] around six hundred years have passed since then.

在雨花臺山，僅此一墓，并有右碑曰《馬回回墓》，未記官職名號及年月。此後來所立之碑紀也。

[Today,] there is only this one grave on the Rain Flower Terrace (*Yuhuatai*) hill with a stele right to it, inscribed [only with the words] “Grave of Ma the Muslim” (*Ma Huihui Mu* 馬回回墓), without his official positions, name, and life dates, [because] this stele was erected later [in the Qing or in the Republic].

當明朝時代，南京城內雨花臺山馬回回墓，乃為我回教極盛之景。

In the Ming dynasty, the grave of Ma the Muslim [was located] on the Rain Flower Terrace hill in the city of Nanjing, creating a magnificent light of our Islamic creed [回教].

至明末後，本族族人因回避皇親國難，消沒碑紀，即宣傳此墓在浙江紹興府會稽縣餘姚山。乃因我馬氏三支紹興落戶之故，即以此為籍口也。

Because at the end of the Ming, the people of our family escaped from the national calamity [that befell] the emperor’s kin [i.e. the Manchu conquest]⁷⁰, they destroyed the stele inscription. Then it was propagated that the grave is [actually] located on the Yuyao hill 餘姚山 in Kuaiji County 會稽縣⁷¹ [near the city of] Shaoxing 紹興 in Zhejiang. Because the third branch of our Ma family [i.e. the Ma Hasha 馬哈沙 line] settled in Shaoxing, this was used as a ‘pretext’ [藉口] [for the claim that the grave was located there].

至今我江蘇馬氏每新年墳之際，必首先公同游此。

Until the present day [c.1928], the first thing our Ma family in Jiangsu will do every New Year, is to jointly journey to the site of the grave [in Shaoxing].

⁶⁹ A hill called *Yuhuatai* 雨花台 is south of the South Gate of Nanjing

⁷⁰ And Ma Shaihei was, according to the *zongpu*, himself part of the emperor’s kin because he was Hongwu’s son-in-law!

⁷¹ Shaoxing 紹興 is a city in northeastern Zhejiang, circa 280 km southeast of Nanjing. Kuaiji County 會稽縣 is located in today’s Shaoxing prefecture. Remarkably, Zheng He’s Muslim translator, Ma Huan, also hailed from Kuaiji. Ma’s preface to his *Overall Survey* ends with the words: “Written by Ma Huan, the mountain-woodcutter of Kuaiji” (會稽山樵馬歡述).

雨花臺山，我馬氏來華氏祖馬回回之墓也。至今人皆呼雨花臺山馬回回墳，即此也。
The Yuhuatai hill is [the real place of] the grave of our ancestor Ma the Muslim from our family Ma who came to China. Until the present day, people call the Yuhuatai hill ‘Grave of Ma the Muslim’ (*Ma Huihui fen* 馬回回墳). That is how it is.

二世祖，長支祖沙亦黑公，字仲德。二支祖哈馬公，字仲良，配胡氏。乃江蘇大測堂馬氏祖也。

The ancestor of the [first] branch of the second generation is the Honourable [Ma] Shayihei, courtesy name Zhongde. The ancestor of the second branch [of the second generation] is the Honourable [Ma] Hama, courtesy name Zhongliang, who married into a family with the surname Hu 胡 and is the ancestor of the ‘Hall of the Great Observer Ma’ in Jiangsu.

授欽天監監副，誥授文林郎，著作宏富。如回回曆本，天文算法，并有《七政推步》本七卷。明朝貝琳撰，即仲良公所撰之曆本也。皆載清朝《四庫全書》內。

[Ma Hama] was given the post of Astronomical Bureau Vice-Director (*Qintianjian jianfu* 欽天監監副). The court granted him the title Gentleman-litterateur [文林郎]⁷², his writings are plentiful. For instance, [he authored] the book *Islamic Calendrical Science* (*Huihui li* 回回曆), and *Astronomy and Arithmetic* (*Tianwen suanfa* 天文算法).⁷³ Moreover, there is the book *Calculation of the Seven Celestial Bodies* (*Qizheng tuibu* 七政推步) in seven scrolls. The Ming Dynasty [scholar] Bei Lin 貝琳⁷⁴ compiled [these works, creating] the Honourable Zhongliang’s (Ma Hama’s) collected works on astronomy. They are all included in the Qing Dynasty collectaneum *Complete Library*.

三支祖馬沙公，字仲義，隨彥明公始祖由祖國回中華。

The ancestor of the third branch [of the second generation] is the Honourable Ma [Ha]sha, courtesy name Zhongyi. He followed [our] primal ancestor, the Honourable Yanming [i.e. Ma Deluding], from the land of our ancestors back to China.

始祖卒後，仲義公乃撇棄官場，經營商業，人籍紹興，此即浙江大測堂馬氏祖也。

After our primal ancestor [Ma Deluding] died, the Honourable Zhongyi [i.e. Ma Hasha] gave up his career in officialdom and engaged in business. His household was registered in Shaoxing. He is the ancestor of the ‘Hall of the Great Observer Ma’ in Zhejiang.

⁷² A prestige title for civil officials; rank 7a in the Yuan, Ming, and Qing. See Hucker (1985), *Dictionary*, title no. 7717.

⁷³ I could not locate a work titled *Tianwen suanfa* 天文算法 yet.

⁷⁴ Bei Lin 貝琳 was Vice-Director of the Astronomical Bureau in Nanjing; in the late fifteenth century, he restored the Chinese translation *Huihui lifa*, which is a translation of Zhamaluding’s Persian *zīj* (astronomical ‘handbook’). Bei Lin’s restoration is more complete than the *Mingshi* version of the *Huihui lifa*.

7. *Hanging Scroll from the ‘Hall of the Great Observer Ma’*⁷⁵

始祖德魯丁公，賜姓馬，名欽，字彥明。

[Our] primal ancestor was the Honourable [Ma] Deluding. The family name Ma was bestowed upon him, his given name was Qin 欽, his courtesy name Yanming.

公為西域魯密國人，真教，精通天文數學。

[Ma Deluding] came from the country of Rumi 魯密 in the Western Regions (*Xiyu* 西域), [the faith that he professed was] Islam [真教]⁷⁶ and he was proficient in astronomy and mathematics.

於明洪武二十年攜三子賚貢來華，隨宋國公內附。

In the twentieth year of the Hongwu era (1387), [Ma Deluding] came to China, accompanied by his three sons, to offer tribute [賚貢], and submitted to the authority of the Duke of Song (*Songguo gong* 宋國公).

明太祖嘉其學有淵源，遂留朝用，封回回太師府爵，欽天監博士，賜姓馬，封大測堂，就明德後外姓。

The Great Ancestor of the Ming (Hongwu) praised the depth of his knowledge. Thus, [he] made [Ma Deluding] stay at the court [in Nanjing] and conferred [the titles] ‘Great Muslim Master’ (*Huihui Dashi*) and ‘Mathematician in the Astronomical Bureau’ (*Qintianjian Boshi* 欽天監博士)⁷⁷ upon him. He bestowed upon him the family name Ma; [thus] he named him after the maiden name of Empress Ma. He conferred upon him [the ‘hall name,’ *tanghao*, or lineage name] ‘Hall of the Great Observer’ (*Dace tang*).

洪武二十五年，乞假回西域，三年返，途至浙西紹興餘姚山病卒，遂葬是地。三子哈沙構蘆守墓，於此為家焉。

In the twenty-fifth year of the Hongwu era (1392)⁷⁸, [Ma Deluding] requested [that he might be allowed] to return to the Western Regions.⁷⁹ Three years later, he came back [to China]. His road led him to the Yuyao hill 餘姚山 at Shaoxing 紹興 in Western Zhejiang, where he died of illness and where he was buried. His third son, [Ma] Hasha, built a reed shed to protect the grave and made this place [the Yuyao hill / Shaoxing] his home.

⁷⁵ Source: Anonymous (1996 [early Republic]), *Nanjing Dace tang Ma guazhou* 南京‘大測堂馬’掛軸 [*The Hanging scroll from the ‘Hall of the Great Observer Ma’ in Nanjing*], reprinted in Ma & Chen, *Zhongguo huihui lifa jicong*, 1027. I adopt Ma Mingda’s punctuation, with some modifications.

⁷⁶ Note that *Zhenjiao* 真教 must mean “Islam” here, although it can historically also refer to Buddhism. *Zhenjiao* is apparently an abbreviation of *Qingzhenjiao* 清真教, which was one of many terms for Islam in the Ming and Qing.

⁷⁷ Throughout Chinese history, a *boshi* 博士 (in the most general sense of the word) was an official of special, broad skill and knowledge. Thus, it is not surprising that, in modern Chinese, *boshi* is the term equivalent to “Doctor” or “PhD.” Historically there have been different types of *boshi* in different institutions of government. On the one hand, a *boshi* was a ritual specialist in the Court of Imperial Sacrifices (*Taichang si* 太常寺). On the other hand, *boshi* has been since Han times the designation of a teacher in an organised state school, mainly in schools located in the dynastic capital. In the Ming and Qing, the teaching title was restricted to the Imperial Academy (*Guozhi jian* 國子監) and the Astronomical Bureau (*Qintianjian*) in the central government. For an overview of the title *boshi* in Chinese history, see Hucker (1985), *Dictionary*, title no. 4746. Hucker translates *boshi* generally as “Erudite,” but notes that a *boshi* in the Astronomical Bureau is best translated as ‘Mathematician.’

⁷⁸ The *zongpu* has the “fifth year” of Hongwu instead of the “twenty-fifth year.” The date of the *zongpu* apparently makes more sense than the date in the *Nanjing Scroll*.

⁷⁹ The *zongpu* has the “land of his ancestors” and specifically Arabia (*Tianfang*) instead of the more general Western Regions.

曆見《四庫》。

For the calendar, see the *Complete Library*.⁸⁰

真教至清康熙年間，始改稱清真教。

[The character] ‘*qing* 清’ [‘clear, pure’ and/or ‘Qing dynasty’] was added to the term ‘Zhenjiao 真教’ [lit. ‘True Teaching,’ i.e. Islam] in the Kangxi era. Only then was it [Islam] called ‘Qingzhenjiao 清真教’ [lit. ‘Pure true teaching’].⁸¹

二世祖沙亦黑，字仲德。前明明太祖賜配其第十三公主，招為駙馬，封欽天監監正，任四譯館，翻譯回回文書，成為《馬沙亦黑文集》，現存《四庫》。

[Ma Deluding’s son] [Ma] Shayihe, courtesy name Zhongde, [belongs to] the second generation of our ancestors. ‘In the former Ming’ [前明], the Great Ancestor of the Ming (Hongwu) made him the husband of his thirteenth princess and his son-in-law. [Hongwu] conferred the title of Astronomical Bureau Director upon him and appointed him to a post in the *Bureau of Translators* (*Siyi guan*). He translated Arabic/Persian [回回文] books, which are known as *The Collected Works of Ma Shayihe* (*Ma Shayihe wenji* 馬沙亦黑文集) and contained in the *Complete Library*.

成祖北遷，永樂四年欽取北京，賜磚塔胡同。

When the Accomplished Ancestor (Yongle) moved north in the 4th year of Yongle (1406), he chose [as capital] Beijing and gave [Ma] *Zhuanta Hutong* 磚塔胡同 ‘Brick Pagoda Lane.’

後在河北保定府置業，稱為駙馬莊馬家寨。清朝入華之時，改為空城馬家寨，現改名聚真堂。另立排行二十三字，知字起，與江南大測堂明字同輩。抄錄馬良公子貞《家譜》。

Later, [Ma Shayihe] established a manor in Baoding 保定 prefecture in Hebei, which was called ‘Manor of the Emperor’s son-in-law in the Ma village’ [駙馬莊馬家寨]. ‘When the Qing dynasty [i.e. the Manchus] entered China’ [清朝入華之時], [the manor’s name] was changed to ‘Empty Town Ma village’ [空城馬家寨]; in the present, the name was changed to ‘Truth-Gathering Hall’ (*Juzhen tang* 聚真堂). Moreover, an arrangement [排行] of twenty-three characters [for the names of future generations] was formulated (*li* 立), beginning with the character ‘*zhi* 知’ (knowledge). The ‘*zhi* 知 generation’ [from Ma Shayihe’s Northern branch] is the same generation as the ‘*ming* 明 generation’ of the Jiangnan ‘Hall of the Great Observer’ (*Dace tang*) [i.e. Ma Hama’s branch]. [The author of this scroll] adopted [information about Ma Shayihe’s branch] from the genealogy [家譜] of the Honourable Ma Liang 馬良 [1875-1947], courtesy name Zizhen 子貞.⁸²

哈麻，字仲良。前明洪武二十四年封欽天監監副，文林郎，任四譯館，翻譯回回文書，成為《馬哈麻文集》，現存《四庫》。

[The following paragraph is about Ma Deluding’s son] [Ma] Hama, courtesy name Zhongliang. ‘In the former Ming,’ in the twenty-fourth year of the Hongwu era (1391), the titles Astronomical Bureau Vice-Director and Gentleman-litterateur were conferred upon him and he was appointed to a post in the *Bureau of Translators*. He translated Arabic/Persian [回回文] books, which are known as *The Collected Works of Ma Hama* (*Ma Hama wenji* 馬哈麻文集) and are contained in the *Complete Library*.⁸³

⁸⁰ Sic. That seems a bit out of context.

⁸¹ Sic. This sentence, too, seems rather out of context.

⁸² In 1928, the Ma family descendant Ma Liang 馬良 et al. compiled the current source.

⁸³ Compare this to the similar passage about Ma Shayihe above. Unlike in his brother’s case, it is not stated that Ma Hama’s works are “plentiful.” There is also no work named (as the *Huihui li* 回回曆).

永樂四年，奉詔留住南京，闡揚教理。現江南一族，即其後裔。

In the fourth year of the Yongle era (1371), [Ma Hama] received an imperial command to settle in Nanjing, [in order to] expound and propagate the principles of his teaching [教理]. The contemporary family members in the Jiangnan area are his descendants.

至嘉靖四十年後，五世祖始立二十字為，玉應三如世，之士遵景恒，明中惟繼大，文光國治崇。

After the fortieth year of the Jiajing era (1561), the fifth generation of ancestors composed the following twenty characters [as the middle names for future generations]: 玉應三如世，之士遵景恒，明中惟繼大，文光國治崇。

十三世景濤公接立二十字，元良誠永保，至德立先墓，廣裕周干禩，昌華顯萬期。

The Honourable Jingtao 景濤 of the thirteenth generation added [the following] twenty characters: 元良誠永保，至德立先墓，廣裕周干禩，昌華顯萬期。

哈沙，字仲義。前明洪武二十五年，因兩兄在京奉職，公伴父回西域，三年返。父病卒於浙江西紹興餘姚山途次，遂葬是地。公構蘆守墓，於此家焉。浙西馬氏一族，即其後裔。

[The following paragraph is about Ma Deluding's son] [Ma] Hasha, courtesy name Zhongyi. Because his two brothers served in the capital (Nanjing), he accompanied their father back to the Western Regions in the twenty-fifth year of Hongwu (1392) 'of the former Ming.' Three years later, [Ma Deluding and Ma Hasha] came back. The father [Ma Deluding] fell ill and died. At the Yuyao hill at Shaoxing in western Zhejiang his journey ended. Then he was buried at this place. [Ma Hasha] built a reed shed to protect the grave and made this place his home. The Ma family members in Western Zhejiang are his descendants.

迨滿族人主中華，北方馬氏因皇親嫌，飽受驚恐，故有改空城馬之舉。江南馬氏恐亦因此不敢露面，浙西馬氏或因此少通聞問。年深月久，已成陌路。盼後人有力將三族合一，則更盛矣。

While the Manchus ruled China, the northern Ma family [i.e. the Beijing branch of Ma Shayihei] suffered much fear because of their association with the emperor's kin. Thus, they changed [the name of their family village⁸⁴] to 'Empty Town of the Mas' (*Kongcheng Ma*). Certainly for this reason, the Ma family of Jiangnan [i.e. the Nanjing branch of Ma Hama] did not dare to appear in public either. The Ma family of Western Zhejiang [i.e. the Shaoxing branch of Ma Hasha], probably for the same reason, did not communicate many messages. With the passage of time, [the three branches of the family] became strangers [to each other]. Hopefully, later generations will find the strength to [re]unite the three branches, so that [our family] will prosper ever more greatly.

三世祖馬哈三 四世祖 五世祖馬鸞

Ma Hasan 馬哈三 [Hassan حسن], ancestor from the third generation.

An ancestor from the fourth generation.

Ma Luan 馬鸞, ancestor from the fifth generation.

⁸⁴ Because the old name, according to the genealogical material, proudly included the term *fuma* 駙馬 'emperor's son-in-law,' which now, under the Qing, had Ming-loyalist connotations. See above.

Appendix B: Chinese lemmata in the seminal *Sino-Barbarian Translations* (1389)

Note — In all cases of unclear Chinese ‘lemmata’ for Mongolian ‘translations’ (especially regarding words for hawks, falcons, and other birds), I have given the Mongolian equivalent in Latin transcription instead of an English translation of the Chinese ‘lemma.’ In cases when the English equivalent is almost certain, I have added a question mark, e.g. ‘yogurt?’ (lemma 366). In cases, where the Chinese lemma ‘makes sense’ but still does not spell a word that is more or less unambiguous or at least traceable in other Chinese sources, I provide an exact translation of the lemma in quotation marks, e.g. “milk cake” (367) or “black eagle” (185).

I. *Tianwen men* 天文門 [Heavenly Patterns]: 19 entries

1. 天, heaven	2. 日, sun	3. 月, moon	4. 星, star
5. 風, wind	6. 雲, cloud	7. 烟, smoke	8. 霜, frost
9. 冰, ice	10. 雪, snow	11. 雷, thunder	12. 霖, drizzle
13. 雨, rain	14. 露, dew	15. 虹, rainbow	16. 霧, fog
17. 電, lightening	18. 雹, hail	19. 天河, Milky Way	

II. *Dili men* 地理門 [Earthly Features]: 38 entries

20. 地, earth	21. 土, soil	22. 山, mountain	23. 林, forest
24. 河, river	25. 湖, lake	26. 溪, brook	27. 潭, pond
28. 沙, sand	29. 泉, spring	30. 溝, ditch	31. 田, field
32. 園, garden	33. 籬, fence	34. 牆, wall	35. 塵, dust
36. 泥, mud	37. 村, village	38. 水, water	39. 海, sea
40. 浪, wave	41. 磧, gravel	42. 岸, shore	43. 潦, flood
44. 石, stone	45. 野, open country	46. 路, path	47. 嶺, ridge
48. 陸, continent	49. 關, pass	50. 口子, pass exit	51. 城, town
52. 國, country	53. 市, market	54. 井, well	55. 圈子, camp
56. 大道, broad road	57. 堠, <i>ovoo</i> (cairn)		

III. *Shiling men* 時令門 [Time and Seasons]: 24 entries

58. 春, spring	59. 夏, summer	60. 秋, autumn	61. 冬天, winter
62. 時, time	63. 年, year	64. 晝, day	65. 夜, night
66. 午, noon	67. 晚, evening	68. 伏, hot season	69. 寒, cold season
70. 溫, warm	71. 涼, cool	72. 熱, hot	73. 暖, lukewarm
74. 凍, to freeze	75. 冷, cold	76. 旱, dry	77. 清早, morning
78. 正旦, first day of the year	79. 除夕, New Year’s eve	80. 古昔, the old days	81. 今, the present time

IV. Huamu men 花木門 [‘Flowers and Trees’ = Plants]: 38 entries

82. 松, pine	83. 柏, cypress	84. 竹, bamboo	85. 檜, juniper
86. 榆樹, elm	87. 柳浪, willow	88. 荊, thornbush	89. 棗, date
90. 梨, pear	91. 果, fruit	92. 杏, apricot	93. 葡萄, grape
94. 胡桃, walnut	95. 花, flower	96. 枝, branch	97. 葉, leaf
98. 根, root	99. 蓬, fleabane	100. 蒿, wormwood	101. 種子, seed
102. 粟, grain; millet	103. 大麥, barley	104. 小麥, wheat	105. 粳米, Japanese rice
106. 米, rice	107. 荳, bean	108. 韭, leek	109. 葱, onion
110. 蒜, garlic	111. 薤, spring onion	112. 甜瓜, muskmelon	113. 西瓜, watermelon
114. 葫蘆, gourd	115. 茄子, aubergine	116. 芥, mustard	117. 蘿蔔, radish
118. 草, grass	119. 木, tree		

V. Niaoshou men 鳥獸門 [‘Birds and Beasts’ = Animals]: 110 entries

120. 龍, dragon	121. 虎, tiger	122. 犀, rhinoceros	123. 獅子, lion
124. 熊, bear	125. 馬, horse	126. 騮馬, gelding	127. 兒馬, stallion
128. 牝馬, mare	129. 騾, mule	130. 驢, donkey	131. 駒, colt
132. 牛, ox; cow	133. 羊, sheep; goat	134. 黃羊, gazelle	135. 豬, pig
136. 野豬, wild boar	137. 犢, calf	138. 豺, jackal	139. 狼, wolf
140. 猴, monkey	141. 狐, fox	142. 沙狐, corsac fox	143. 獐, roe deer
144. 鹿, deer	145. 貂鼠, marten	146. 彪, small tiger	147. 貓, cat
148. 駱駝, camel	149. 象, elephant	150. 兔, rabbit	151. 麝, musk deer
152. 獺, otter	153. 狗, dog	154. 小狗, puppy	155. 毛牛, yak
156. 獾, hedgehog	157. 母豬, sow	158. 乳牛, milk cow	159. 牯牛, ox
160. 羖羝, goat	161. 鼠, rat	162. 鼫鼠, mole	163. 羔, lamb
164. 羝羊, billy goat	165. 羝羖羝, nanny goat	166. 魚, fish	167. 龜, tortoise
168. 蝦蟆, frog	169. 蜘蛛, spider	170. 蛇, snake	171. 蛾, moth
172. 蚊, mosquito	175. 蠅, fly	174. 蝗, locust	175. 螢, glowworm
176. 蟲, worm; insect	177. 蟻, ant	178. 虱, louse	179. 蚤, flea
180. 虻, horsefly	181. 黃鼠, marmot	182. 鼈, turtle	183. 禽, birds; fowl
184. 鳳凰, phoenix	185. 黑鷹, black eagle	186. 白項鴉, <i>alah tahun</i>	187. 老烏, crow
188. 斑鳩, turtledove	189. 鶚, fishhawk	190. 黃鷹, falcon	191. 鷦, sparrowhawk

192. 鳶, vulture	193. 雞, chicken	194. 鵝, goose	195. 鴛鴦, mandarin duck
196. 鸚鵡, parrot	197. 燕, swallow	198. 鵲, magpie	199. 野雞, pheasant
200. 鴿, pigeon	201. 鴨, duck	202. 鵱, owl	203. 雀, sparrow
204. 孔雀, peacock	205. 海青, gyrfalcon	206. 天鵝, swan	207. 鴉鵂, <i>lacin</i>
208. 兔鶻, <i>itelgu</i>	209. 龍朵兒, <i>turimtai</i>	210. 鶻, quail	211. 花豹, leopard
212. 角鷹, eagle	213. 松兒, <i>lah</i>	214. 百雄, <i>jahalimai</i>	215. 水老鴉, cormorant?
216. 翎, feather	217. 翅, wing	218. 爪, claw	219. 蹄, hoof
220. 角, horn	221. 皮, skin; hide	222. 嘴, beak	223. 鬃, mane
224. 尾, tail	225. 鱗, scales (of fish)	226. 臍, navel	227. 骨, bone
228. 卵, egg; spawn	229. 飛, to fly	230. 走, to walk;	231. 嘶, to neigh
232. 吠, to bark	233. 吼, to roar	234. 叫, to bleat?	235. 觸, to hit with horns

VI. *Gongshi men* 宮室門 ['Palaces and Chambers' = Buildings]: 17 entries

236. 宮, palace	237. 門, door	238. 門扇, wing of door	239. 限屋, doorsill
240. 屋脊, roof ridge	241. 屋椽, rafter	242. 柱, pillar; column	243. 房子, house
244. 橋, bridge	245. 磚, brick	246. 鋪面, pavement	247. 寺廟, temple
248. 院落, courtyard	249. 塔, stupa	250. 瓦, roof tile	251. 開, to open
252. 閉, to close			

VII. *Qiyong men* 器用門 [Tools and Utensils]: 71 entries

253. 車, cart	254. 輪, wheel	255. 轅, axle of cart	256. 輻, spoke of wheel
257. 輞, rim of wheel	258. 車頭, hub of wheel	259. 車箱, carriage	260. 韁繩, reins
261. 鞭, whip	262. 牌, shield	263. 鎗, spear	264. 環刀, scimitar
265. 斧, hatchet; axe	266. 弓, bow	267. 弓弦, bowstring	268. 旗, banner; flag
269. 轡頭, bridle	270. 鐙, stirrup	271. 甲, armour	272. 頭盔, helmet
273. 箭, arrow	274. 砲, cannon	275. 大鼓, kettledrum	276. 小鼓, drum
277. 犁, plough	278. 鎌, scythe; sickle	279. 槽, trough	280. 繩, rope
281. 箏, zither	282. 瓶, bottle; vase	283. 盞子, small cup	284. 盤, plate
285. 鈔, pan with handle	286. 匙, spoon	287. 木盆, wooden bowl	288. 簸箕, fan

289. 簾, curtain	290. 櫃, cabinet	291. 囊, sack	292. 梳, comb
293. 針, needle	294. 燈, lamp	295. 燈盞, lantern	296. 梯, ladder
297. 拄杖, walking stick	298. 帚, broom	299. 印, seal	300. 器皿, vessels
301. 筆, brush	302. 紙, paper	303. 墨, ink	304. 旋網, net
305. 大網, trawl net?	306. 鍋, pot	307. 杵, pestle	308. 臼, mortar
309. 碗, bowl; cup	310. 桌子, table; desk	311. 鏡, mirror	312. 席, mat; seat
313. 床, bed	314. 枕, pillow	315. 秤, weighing scale	316. 剪子, scissors
317. 鎖, lock	318. 鑰匙, key	319. 交床, easy chair?	320. 拍板, castanets?
321. 鑼, gong	322. 火, fire	323. 炭, charcoal	

VIII. *Yifu men* 衣服門 [‘Jackets and Dresses’ = Clothing]: 26 entries

324. 衣, jacket	325. 衣襟, lapel	326. 皮襖, fur coat	327. 鞋, shoes
328. 靴, boots	329. 氈, felt	330. 麻, hemp; flax	331. 厚襖子, thick coat
332. 衣領, collar	333. 袖, sleeve	334. 衣帶, belt	335. 腰線, undergarment?
336. 帶, belt	337. 褲, trousers	338. 褥子, mattress	339. 被, quilt
340. 幔, curtain	341. 氈襪, felt socks	342. 錦, brocade	343. 綉, embroidery
344. 生絹, raw silk	345. 熟絹, silk fabric	346. 布, textiles	347. 線, thread
348. 綿, cotton	349. 綿布, cotton cloth		

IX. *Yinshi men* 飲食門 [Food and Drink]: 28 entries

350. 膏糜, rice gruel	351. 粥, porridge	352. 酒, wine	353. 湯, soup
354. 鹽, salt	355. 酥油, butter	356. 脂, fat	357. 油, oil
358. 燒餅, roasted cake	359. 肉, meat	360. 燒肉, roasted meat	361. 乾肉, dried meat
362. 酪, cheese	363. 馬奶子, horse milk	364. 駝奶子, camel milk	365. 乾酪, dried cheese
366. 熬酪, yogurt?	367. 乳餅, ‘milk cake’	368. 醋, vinegar	369. 藥, medicine
370. 味, taste	371. 嘗, to taste	372. 調和, to mix	373. 煮, to cook
374. 割, to cut	375. 喫, to eat	376. 饑, to be hungry	377. 飽, to eat till full

X. Zhenbao men 珍寶門 [Treasures]: 13 entries

378. 金, gold	379. 銀, silver	380. 寶, treasure	381. 玉, jade; gem
382. 珠, pearl	383. 大珠, big pearl	384. 銅, copper	385. 錫, tin
386. 鐵, iron	387. 錢, coins	388. 水晶, crystal	389. 水銀, mercury
390. 生銅, copper ore			

XI. Renwu men 人物門 [Humans]: 86 entries

391. 皇帝, emperor	392. 臣, minister	393. 官人, official	394. 軍, soldiers
395. 人, person	396. 農人, peasant	397. 匠, craftsman	398. 太醫, physician
399. 卜者, diviner	400. 師傅, teacher	401. 朋友, friend	402. 客, guest
403. 老人, the elderly	404. 主, master; host	405. 百姓, commoners	406. 奴婢, slave; servant
407. 祖宗, ancestors	408. 父, father	409. 伯父, father's elder brother	410. 叔, father's younger brother
411. 母, mother	412. 姑姑, paternal aunt	413. 姨, maternal aunt	414. 舅, maternal uncle
415. 外甥, sister's son	416. 兄, elder brother	417. 姐姐, older sister	418. 妹, younger sister
419. 弟, younger brother	420. 嫂, older brother's wife	421. 妻, wife	422. 孩兒, son
423. 女兒, daughter	424. 子, child	425. 姪, niece	426. 媳婦, son's wife
427. 壻, son-in-law	428. 弟婦, younger brother's wife	429. 丈人, wife's father	430. 丈母, wife's mother
431. 公公, husband's father	432. 娘娘, husband's mother	433. 曾祖, great-grandfather	434. 高祖, great-great-grandfather
435. 孫, grandson	436. 男子, man	437. 婦人, woman	438. 娘子, lady
439. 嫗, old woman	440. 小兒, young child	441. 親眷, relatives	442. 唱的, singer
443. 皮匠, cobbler	444. 漁人, fisherman	445. 獵人, hunter	446. 牧羊人, shepherd
447. 牧馬人, herdsman	448. 牧牛人, cowboy	449. 吏, archivist; official	450. 生靈, creature
451. 漢人, 'Chinese'	452. 達達, 'Mongols'	453. 佛, Buddha, 'Buddhists'	454. 回回, 'Muslims'
455. 師公, male shaman	456. 師婆, female shaman	457. 和尚, Buddhist monk	458. 鬼, ghost; demon
459. 神, spirit; god	460. 自己, oneself	461. 我, I; me	462. 你, you
463. 咱, we	464. 伴當, companion	465. 我的, my; mine	466. 你的, your; yours
467. 他的, his	468. 厨子, cook	469. 使臣, envoy	470. 馬夫, horsekeeper

471. 勇士, hero	472. 寡婦, widow	473. 親家, relatives by marriage	474. 義兒, adopted son
475. 兩姨夫, brothers-in-law	476. 賊, thief		

XII. *Renshi men* 人事門 [Human Affairs]: 140 entries

477. 聽, to hear	478. 見, to see	479. 窺, to watch	480. 搜, to search
481. 迎, to welcome	482. 誇, to praise	483. 教, to teach	484. 拿, to take
485. 擡, to raise; to carry	486. 添, to increase	487. 減, to decrease	488. 相遇, to encounter
489. 催, to urge; to rush	490. 覺了, I am aware.	491. 知了, I understand.	492. 認, to recognise
493. 省, to save?	494. 記, to record	495. 隨, to follow	496. 想, to think
497. 思, to consider	498. 審, to examine	499. 問, to ask	500. 到, to arrive
501. 止, to stop	502. 告, to inform	503. 分離, to separate	504. 待, to wait
505. 擇, to choose	506. 戲, theatre play	507. 行, to walk	508. 回, to return
509. 來, to come	510. 言, to talk	511. 唱, to sing	512. 睡, to sleep
513. 少睡, to be sleepy?	514. 喚, to call	515. 請, to ask, request	516. 會, to gather
517. 醉, to be drunk	518. 舞, to dance	519. 嘯, to whistle	520. 讀, to read
521. 打, to hit	522. 罵, to curse	523. 跪, to kneel	524. 歇息, to rest
525. 坐, to sit	526. 叩頭, to kowtow	527. 夢, to dream	528. 睡覺, to awake
529. 立, to stand	530. 作事, to do things	531. 起, to get up	532. 走, to walk
533. 去, to go away	534. 入, to enter	535. 出, to go out	536. 笑, to laugh
537. 譏笑, to ridicule	538. 事, affairs; business	539. 送, to see off	540. 愁, to worry
541. 喜, to be happy	542. 羞, to be ashamed	543. 嫌, to hate	544. 嗔, to be angry
545. 勤, make an effort	546. 忙, to be busy	547. 猜, to guess	548. 快樂, joy
549. 生受, to suffer	550. 怕, to fear	551. 怒, anger	552. 愛, to love
553. 懶, to be lazy	554. 惜, to pity	555. 賞, to bestow	556. 相愛, to be in love
557. 富, to be rich	558. 窮, to be poor	559. 能的, powerful; able	560. 多能, to be talented
561. 貪, to be greedy	562. 愚, to be stupid	563. 癡, to be silly	564. 聰明, intelligent
565. 爽利, brisk; able	566. 誠, to be honest	567. 捲, to roll up	568. 蓋, to cover

569. 掛, to hang	570. 載, to load; to carry	571. 過, to pass; to cross	572. 倚, to lean on
573. 掃, to sweep	574. 撒, to scatter	575. 敲, to knock	576. 推, to push
577. 扯, to pull	578. 翻, to turn over	598. 放, to release	580. 扶, to support
581. 傾, to pour out	582. 救, to save	583. 算, to count	584. 索, to demand
585. 與, to give	586. 要, to want	587. 尋, to seek	588. 壓, to (op)press
589. 管, to take care of	590. 拴, to tie up (horse)	591. 韁, to saddle (horse)	592. 射, to shoot (arrow)
593. 牽, to pull (animal)	594. 補, to repair	595. 脫, to take off	596. 賣, to sell
597. 買, to buy	598. 商量, to discuss	599. 安排, to arrange	600. 分付, to distribute
601. 向前來, to come forward	602. 改換, to change	603. 擡舉, to foster	604. 報恩, to repay a kindness
605. 憐恤, to take pity	606. 收拾, to collect	607. 分揀, to differentiate	608. 緣故, reason, cause
609. 一同, all together	610. 作伴, to accompany	611. 推辭, pretext; excuse	612. 丁寧, to warn
613. 保護, to protect	614. 帶着, wearing sth.	615. 自由, at own discretion	616. 恐嚇, to threaten

XIII. *Shengse men* 聲色門 [Colours]: 17 entries

617. 紅, red	618. 青, blue	619. 黃, yellow	620. 白, white
621. 黑, black	622. 綠, green	623. 紫, purple	624. 大紅, crimson
625. 素, plain	626. 駝褐, camel-brown	627. 灰色, grey	628. 聲, tone
629. 色, colour	630. 影, shadow	631. 光, light; shine	632. 香, incense; fragrance
633. 氣, <i>qi</i> ; air; spirit			

XIV. *Shumu men* 數目門 [Numbers]: 35 entries

634. 一, one	635. 二, two	636. 三, three	637. 四, four
638. 五, five	639. 六, six	640. 七, seven	641. 八, eight
642. 九, nine	643. 十, ten	644. 二十, twenty	645. 三十, thirty
646. 四十, forty	647. 五十, fifty	648. 六十, sixty	649. 七十, seventy
650. 八十, eighty	651. 九十, ninety	652. 百, hundred	653. 千, thousand
654. 萬, ten thousand	655. 萬萬, ten thousand times ten thousand	656. 數, number	657. 幾, how much

658. 多, much	659. 少, little	660. 般, sort; kind	661. 雙, pair; couple
662. 獨, alone	663. 單, single	664. 羣, group	665. 塊, piece; chunk
666. 半, half	667. 半塊, half a piece	668. 重, double	

XV. Shenti men 身體門 [The Human Body]: 76 entries

669. 身, body	670. 頭, head	671. 面, face	672. 眼, eye
673. 額, forehead	674. 腮, cheek	675. 鼻, nose	676. 耳, ear
677. 口, mouth	678. 舌, tongue	679. 齒, teeth	680. 眉, eyebrows
681. 睫, eyelashes	682. 髮, hair	683. 髯, beard	684. 唇, lips
685. 喉, throat	686. 項, neck	687. 肩, shoulder	688. 胸, chest
689. 背, back	690. 心坎, bottom of the heart	691. 心, heart	692. 腋, armpit
693. 手, arm	694. 肘, elbow	695. 掌, palm of hand	696. 指, finger
697. 指甲, fingernail	698. 拳, fist	699. 肋, underarm	700. 腹, belly
701. 肝, liver	702. 肺, lung	703. 膽, gallbladder	704. 腸, intestines
705. 脾, spleen	706. 臍, navel	707. 肋, ribs	708. 腰子, kidney
709. 腰, waist	710. 脊, spine	711. 腳, foot	712. 腳面, arch of foot
713. 腳底, soles of the feet	714. 腳後根, heel	715. 膝蓋, knee	716. 賺, loin
717. 踝, ankle	718. 骨, bone	719. 髓, bone marrow	720. 肉, flesh
721. 血, blood	722. 脉, veins; arteries	723. 筋, muscle; tendon	724. 汗, sweat
725. 涕, nasal mucus	726. 靨, dimple	727. 唾, saliva	728. 淚, tears
729. 禿, bald	730. 癩, lame	731. 瞎, blind	732. 聾, deaf
733. 吃, dumb?	734. 肥, fat	735. 瘦, thin	736. 性命, life
737. 仁, benevolence	738. 義, righteousness	739. 禮, etiquette; rites	740. 智, wisdom
741. 信, trustworthiness	742. 理, order	743. 德, virtue; morality	744. 志, will; ambition

XVI. Fangyu men 方隅門 [Directions]: 17 entries

745. 東, east	746. 南, south	747. 西, west	748. 北, north
749. 中, middle	750. 下, down	751. 上, top; above	752. 內, inside
753. 外, outside	754. 前, front	755. 後, behind; rear	756. 左, left
757. 右, right	758. 間, between	759. 邊, border; edge	760. 稍, a little
761. 底, bottom			

XVII. Tongyong men 通用門 [Words of Common Use]: 83 entries

762. 難, difficult	763. 易, easy	764. 有, to have; to exist	765. 無, not have
766. 不, not	767. 休, do not!	768. 似, similar	769. 同, same; like
770. 是, yes; correct	771. 非, not; wrong	772. 實, truly; really	773. 虛, empty; false
774. 疾, fast; swift	775. 緩, slow; leisurely	776. 緊, tight	777. 慢, slow; sluggish
778. 大, big	779. 小, small	780. 高, high; tall	781. 低, low
782. 重, heavy	783. 輕, light (weight)	784. 長, long	785. 短, short
786. 遠, far; distant	787. 近, close	788. 深, deep	789. 淺, shallow
790. 寬, broad; wide	791. 狹, narrow	792. 橫, horizontal	793. 豎, vertical
794. 平, even	795. 斜, slanting	796. 明, bright; clear	797. 渾, muddy
798. 滿, full	799. 闊, rich; broad	800. 新, new	801. 舊, old
802. 圓, round	803. 匾, flat	804. 方, square	805. 薄, thin
806. 厚, thick	807. 軟, soft	808. 硬, hard	809. 曲, crooked
810. 直, straight	811. 窄, narrow	812. 散, to break up	813. 舒, to stretch
814. 利, sharp	815. 鈍, blunt	816. 脆, fragile	817. 初, at first
818. 了, is finished	819. 未, not yet	820. 全, completely	821. 不能, not able
822. 能, able	823. 歹, bad; evil	824. 好, good	825. 明白, clear
826. 好妥, satisfactory?	827. 顛倒, upside down	828. 這裡, here	829. 那里, there
830. 好生, to be diligent	831. 何用, why? what for?	832. 近間, recently	833. 到今, until today
834. 太平, peace and security	835. 潔淨, clean	836. 隨即, immediately	837. 無妨, no harm
838. 為那般, for that reason	839. 為這般, for this reason	840. 若是, if	841. 雖是, although
842. 怎生, how?	843. 不揀甚麼, no matter how	844. 麼道, and that's it	845. 終了, it is finished

Appendix C: Translating the barbarians, or, problems of terminology

Note. This appendix provides further background to the discussion—mentioned in the introduction—as to whether certain terms in primary sources, such as the *Yi* of *Siyi guan* (*Bureau of Translators*), should be translated as ‘barbarians’ or as ‘foreigners.’

In the middle of the seventeenth century, some Chinese intellectuals engaged in a peculiar self-censorship. Certain characters referring to foreigners were left blank or substituted through other characters. Editing the work of his master Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613-1682), the scholar Pan Lei 潘耒 (1646-1708) made the following changes among others:¹

Original	‘Clean’ version
<i>yidi</i> 夷狄 ‘the <i>yi</i> and the <i>di</i> ’	<i>waiguo</i> 外國 ‘outside countries’
<i>siyi</i> 四夷 ‘ <i>yi</i> of the four cardinal directions’	<i>waiguo</i> 外國
<i>siyi</i> 四夷	<i>waifan</i> 外藩 (‘outside [vassal] states’)

Why were such changes deemed necessary? In 1644, the Manchus had overthrown the Ming and established their rule over China through a new dynasty, the Qing. Pan Lei’s objective was to remove all references that might have been considered insulting to the Manchus as ‘foreigners.’ And the fact that Pan perceived *Yi* as potentially offensive shows that it did indeed carry derogatory overtones, while *wai* (lit. ‘outside’) sounded more neutral.

We discover the same censorship in the history of an important institution of this study, the *Siyi guan* 四夷館, founded 1407. For convenience, I translate *Siyi guan* as *Bureau of Translators*, but that is meant to reflect the function of the institute and is not a literal rendering. Literally, *Siyi guan* means *Hostel/Institute for the Yi of the Four Cardinal Directions*. As soon as the Manchus came to power in 1644, terminological modifications were made:²

Original	‘Clean’ version
<i>Siyi guan</i> 四夷館 ‘Hall for All the <i>Yi</i> ’	<i>Siyi guan</i> 四譯館 ‘Hall for All Translations’
<i>Baiyi guan</i> 百夷館 ‘Department for the 100 <i>Yi</i> ’	<i>Baiyi guan</i> 百譯館 ‘...for the 100 Translations’

So where did the term *Yi* come from? Originally it was one of four vague ethnonyms that corresponded to the cardinal directions, *yi* (East), *man* 蠻 (South) *rong* 戎 (West), and *di* 狄 (North). In the classics, people referred to by these terms are routinely portrayed as greedy, aggressive nomads, and contrasted to the ‘Chinese’ by the perceived level of civilisation.³

¹ Quoted after Wilkinson (2013), *Chinese History*, 360, table 65. See *ibid.* for further examples.

² See Crossley (1991), “Structure and Symbol,” 61.

³ Nicola Di Cosmo (2004) has formulated a comprehensive critique of this sinocentric worldview. His *Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) paints a more complex picture of early China and its relations with the ‘barbarians’ who became increasingly organised, advanced, and politically unified.

One classic notes that the *Yi* “wear their hair unbound, tattoo their bodies, and sometimes eat their food without cooking it” [被髮文身，有不火食者矣], the *di* “wear clothes made of feathers, and dwell in caves” [衣羽毛穴居].⁴ Gradually, *Yi* came to signify foreigners on the periphery in general, in opposition to inhabitants of the Central Realm.⁵ However, if *Yi* simply meant ‘foreigner’ in a neutral way, why would Pan Lei have taken the pains of systematically modifying his master’s words, and why would the *Siyi guan* have felt obliged to change *Yi* 夷 into the homophonic *yi* 譯 ‘translation’?

In the nineteenth century, the term *Yi* was discussed by Chinese and European intellectuals alike. The translator and reformer Wang Tao 王韜 (1828-1897) had this to say:

Since many generations people say that *Hua* is inside and the *Yi* are outside. Thus, the Central Realm is called *Hua* and everything outside it is called *Yi*. This is nothing but a great absurdity. (...) According to the norms of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, [only] those dukes and princes who *act* according to the manners of the barbarians are *regarded* as barbarians (*Yi*). (...) The divide between *Hua* (‘civilised,’ ‘Chinese’) and barbarians is not a geographical inside-outside matter but depends on whether or not somebody understands the rites (*li*). Being familiar with the rites, the *Yi* can become *Hua*; lacking familiarity with the rites, *Hua* will turn into *Yi* [自世有內華外夷之說，人遂謂中國為華，而中國以外統謂之夷，此大謬不然者也。 (...) 春秋之法，諸侯用夷禮，則夷之。 (...) 然則華夷之辨，其不在地之內外，而系於禮之有無也明矣。苟有禮也，夷可進為華。苟無禮也，華則變為夷].⁶

Wang defines *Yi* in a way beyond ethnic or national lines as a state of mind: every place in the world, China included, harbours good and bad people alike. In the Ming, people would have understood this idea as well, or else Hongwu’s sinicisation rhetoric (see Chapter Four) would make no sense. Wang actually summarises nicely the ‘culturalist’ persuasion dominant in the field of official early Ming discourse: that *Yi* should be turned into *Hua*. Because of the ‘barbaric connotations’ of *Yi*, terms for foreigners changed gradually but fundamentally in the second half of the nineteenth century, as Fang Weigui 方維規 has shown in great detail.⁷ The following cases—strikingly similar to the Ming-to-Qing transition examples quoted above—will suffice:⁸

Terms before c. 1860	Terms after c. 1860
<i>yiren</i> 夷人 ‘barbarians’	<i>xiren</i> 西人 ‘Westerners’
<i>yiguan</i> 夷官 ‘barbarian officials’	<i>yangguan</i> 洋官 ‘oceanic (= foreign) officials’
<i>Huayi</i> 華夷 ‘China and the barbarians’	<i>Zhongxi</i> 中西 ‘China and the West’

⁴ *Liji* 禮記 [Book of Rites], ch. “Wang Zhi 王制” [Royal Regulations], § 36, quoted after CTEXT.

⁵ See Fang Weigui 方維規 (2001), “Yi [夷], Yang [洋], Xi [西], Wai [外] and Other Terms: The Transition from ‘Barbarian’ to ‘Foreigner’ in Nineteenth-Century China,” in Lackner, Amelung & Kurtz, *New Terms for New Ideas*, 96.

⁶ Wang Tao 王韜 (1893), “Huayi bian 華夷辨” [Differentiating between *hua* and *yi*], in: *Taoyuan wenlu waibian* 弢園文錄外編 [Addendum to the Collection of Writings from Taoyuan].

⁷ Fang (2001), “From Barbarian to Foreigner.”

⁸ Cases taken from Fang (2001), “From Barbarian to Foreigner.” p. 104-105.

Finally, consider the characters for China's Others themselves. Magnus Fiskesjö has shown that until the mid-twentieth century, many of them included components that purposefully classified 'barbaric' foreigners with animals by using orthographic building blocks that have the form of bugs, beasts, or dogs, as is the case in *man* 蠻 (insect classifier) and *di* 狄 (dog classifier).⁹ In Ming times, despite official tolerance, *huihui* 回回 (Muslim) was sometimes written using the character 回 with an additional dog radical.¹⁰ *You* 猶 (simpl. 犹) in the word *youtai* 猶太 (Jewish) is the only 'Other-character' that has kept its old barbarian marker until today; since 2003, the Taiwan Peacetime Foundation has been trying to change 犹 into 尤 by omitting the dog radical.¹¹

Against this backdrop, the definitions given by the canonical *Hanyu dacidian* 漢語大詞典 [*Comprehensive Chinese Word Dictionary*] (1987) for terms such as *Yi* appear decidedly ahistorical, as I have argued in the main introduction. No derogatory overtones are allowed to shine through and the antagonists of the Central Realm are retrospectively turned into 'national minorities' of a modern nation state that has existed, at the time of completing this thesis, for no more than 105 years. The *Hanyu dacidian* entry for 'Hua-Yi 華夷' states that the term "denotes the Chinese and national minorities, and later, China and foreign countries" [指漢族與少數民族。後亦指中國和外國]. But that is a bit too easy.

One might be reminded of a recent bowdlerised edition of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), uniformly replacing the racial slur 'nigger' with the supposedly less demeaning word 'slave.'¹² However, such politically correct revisionism is not only anachronistic but betrays Twain's anti-racist effort to write realistically about attitudes of the 1840s. Even if the novel were racist in itself, the questionable result of such 'benevolent' censorship is to sweep an inconvenient historical truth, which becomes manifest in Twain's language, under the carpet. A viewpoint of historical consciousness demands to leave Twain's novel as it is and complement it with annotations commenting on contested terms.

A similar approach should be adopted for *Yi*. With the above in mind, I argue that translating *Yi* as 'barbarian' comes closer to the historical meaning than a political correct rendering as 'foreigner.' Maybe needless to say, I do not translate *Yi* as 'barbarian' because I believe that the people referred to by it deserved this denomination. Christopher Beckwith

⁹ See Magnus Fiskesjö (2011), "The Animal Other: Re-Naming the Barbarians in 20th-Century China," *Social Text* 29 (2011), 57-79.

¹⁰ See M. A. Aldrich & Lukas Nikol (2010), *The Perfumed Palace: Islam's Journey from Mecca to Peking* (Reading, Berkshire, UK), 63.

¹¹ See Zhang Ping (2008), "Israel and the Jewish People in Chinese Cyberspace Since 2002," in M. Avrum Ehrlich (ed.), *The Jewish-Chinese Nexus: A Meeting of Civilizations* (London: Routledge), 112-113.

¹² The 'exorcised' version: Mark Twain (author) & Alan Gribben (editor) (2011 [1884]), *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: The NewSouth Edition* (Montgomery, AL: NewSouth Books). For a critical edition that leaves the original intact and discusses controversial terms in the introduction and in footnotes, see: Mark Twain (author) & Robert G. O'Meally (editor) (2003 [1884]), *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (New York: Barnes and Noble). Compare: "there's a nigger here that I'm trying to steal out of slavery" (original in O'Meally edition: 272); "there's a slave here that I'm trying to steal out of slavery" (Gribben's 'political correct' edition: 223).

has shown that Central Eurasians have often been depicted as brutish and deceitful because the only histories we know about them were written by people on their periphery who were in conflict with them. He is right in his concern that while historians have tended to condemn the violent acts of Central Eurasians, they have celebrated many of those of their sedentary neighbours (Chinese, Persians, Greeks, Romans). Eventually, over-enthusiastic to make good this injustice, Beckwith declares that *Yi* should not be translated as ‘barbarian’ because the people in question *were no barbarians*.¹³ But is this argument advancing historical understanding? Is it not better to reconstruct as far as possible what the authors of the sources thought and to clearly separate this from what I myself might think about them?

Yet another argument against translating *Yi* as ‘foreigner’ is the fact that we do find generic terms lacking barbaric flavour. As Beckwith himself has noticed, *fan* 番 was such a word in Tang times, often used like one would say today ‘abroad,’ without naming any particular place.¹⁴ *Fan* is used, unsurprisingly, in a Chinese-Tibetan treaty of 823 and other sensitive bilingual documents. Early Ming texts employ *fan* in a similar way, which can be shown by quoting exemplarily a stele erected in 1431, describing Zheng He’s voyages:

“When we arrived at the foreign countries (*wai bang*), barbarian kings (*man wang*) who disrespectfully refused to accept transformation [through China/Civilisation] we captured alive; bandit soldiers who plundered excessively we exterminated. Because of this, the sea routes became clear and peaceful and the foreign people (*fan ren*) could rely upon them and pursue their business in safety [及臨外邦，其蠻王之梗化不恭者，生擒之。寇兵之肆暴掠者，殄滅之。海道由是而清寧，番人賴之以安業].¹⁵

As is evident, people called *man* are the ‘bad’ foreigners (who do not conform to Chinese ways), while *fan* are either the ‘good guys’ or foreigners in general. Similarly, *wai* refers indiscriminately to ‘the good and the bad,’ i.e., to *all* countries that were visited.

As Lydia Liu has rightly pointed out, neither *Yi* nor ‘barbarian’ can be grasped outside of the two terms’ entangled histories and etymologies.¹⁶ Nevertheless, I suggest that standard translations into English are a better solution than incorporating at least seven Chinese terms referring to people or things outside the Central Realm as loan words. While this could be welcomed from the standpoint of philological exactness, readers unfamiliar with Chinese linguistics might find it cumbersome. Furthermore, Beckwith’s argument that ‘barbarian’ is not a ‘good’ translation for *Yi*, as it does not express ‘exactly’ the same cultural construct is a bit of a moot point.¹⁷ He is right (the terms *Yi* and barbarian are not equivalent),

¹³ See “Epilogue: The Barbarians” in Christopher Beckwith (2009), *Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 320-362.

¹⁴ See Beckwith (2009), *Empires of the Silk Road*, 359-360.

¹⁵ *Liujia gang bei* 劉家港碑 [*Liu Family Harbour Stele*].

¹⁶ See Lydia Liu (2004), *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press), 31-32.

¹⁷ In Beckwith’s words, “the word barbarian embodies a complex European cultural construct, a generic pejorative term for a ‘powerful foreigner with uncouth, uncivilized, nonurban culture who was militarily skilled and somewhat heroic, but inclined to violence and cruelty’—yet not a ‘savage’ or a ‘wild man’” (*Empires of the Silk Road*, 360).

but following that kind of advice we could abandon translation altogether, as pairs of words in translation never match perfectly, “the sets of words that each [language] possesses divide up the features of the world in slightly ... different ways.”¹⁸ There may be no ‘correct’ translations, but there are certainly better and worse ones.¹⁹

Thus, as elaborated in the introduction under ‘Methods,’ the following approach has been adopted in this thesis. I translate *Yi* (and the more infrequent terms *di*, *man*, and *rong*, as well as *hu*) standardised as ‘barbarian.’ At the same time I translate *fan* and *wai*, which I understand as generic and neutral terms, as ‘foreign.’ Occasionally I just use the original term in transcription, to make the translatedness of the text explicit and help readers to draw their own conclusions. Whether or not readers are able to deal with the original language (and nobody will ever speak all languages) is perhaps not the best question to be asked: the point is rather that historical writing should make visible the translatedness of sources. This is, unfortunately, not always the case in current scholarship. For example, to promise in the title of a book on the history of science in China to explain that history ‘On Their Own Terms,’ to even discuss translation issues in some depth, but to decide to omit Chinese characters altogether, is a puzzling approach.²⁰ Instead of explaining this away with the ‘standards of mainstream readers,’ it should be recognised that these standards are flawed and due for change: an endeavour to which I gladly contribute with this thesis.

¹⁸ David Bellos (2011), *Is That a Fish in Your Ear? Translation and the Meaning of Everything* (New York: Faber and Faber).

¹⁹ Liu (1999) argues in *Tokens of Exchange: The Problem of Translation in Global Contexts* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 132, that the “presumed equivalence of meaning between *yi* and barbarian” was exaggerated by nineteenth-century British translators for political reasons: to create a crisis around the ‘arrogant sinocentric Chinese attitude’ toward foreigners and to engage in a crusade against the use of *Yi* as a counteroffensive against the Chinese prohibition on the opium trade. The forced translation of *Yi* as barbarian can thus be seen as one ‘excuse’ for Britain to wage war against the Qing. And while this is all not wrong, and the “equivalence of meaning between *yi* and barbarian” was indeed exaggerated for political ends, it was not just a *presumed* equivalence, as I have shown in this section. If an essentially true thought is exploited and abused, it does not become untrue.

²⁰ Benjamin A. Elman (2005), *On Their Own Terms: Science in China, 1550-1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press).

APPENDIX D: Table of contents for complex primary sources

Note — As the following significant sources related to Ming multilingualism and translation activities do not come with their own table of contents or *mulu* 目錄, I provide such tables in order to assist orientation and for the benefit of future research.

1. “Hirth Ms. 1.” Late Ming *yiyu* collection, *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin*

Vol. 1:

Book 1: **Mongolian-Chinese glossary**. Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 116v°. (NB: ‘book’ = *ben* 本.)

Book 2: **Burmese-Chinese glossary**. Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 93v°.

Book 3: **Jurchen-Chinese glossary**. Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 115v°. ¹

Vol. 2:

Book 4: **Tibetan-Chinese glossary**. Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 104v°.

Book 5: **Uyghur-Chinese glossary**. Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 100v°.

Book 6: **Persian-Chinese glossary**. Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 111v°.

Vol. 3:

Book 7: **“*Bayi* 巴夷”-Chinese glossary**. Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 96v°.

Book 8: **“*Babai* 八百”-Chinese glossary**. Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 106v°.

Book 9: **Thai-Chinese glossary**. Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 87v°.

Vol. 4:

Book 10: Supplementary **Uyghur-Chinese glossary**. Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 38v°.

Book 11: Supplementary **Tibetan-Chinese glossary**. Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 59v°.

Book 12: Supplementary **Persian-Chinese glossary**. Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 39v°.

Book 13: Supplementary **“*Bayi* 巴夷”-Chinese glossary**. Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 46v°.

Book 14: Supplementary **Burmese-Chinese glossary**. Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 33v°.

Book 15: Supplementary **“*Babai* 八百”-Chinese glossary**. Length: fol. 1° - fol. 39v°.

Vol. 5:

Book 16: **‘Sanskrit’ syllabary**. Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 48v°. ²

Book 17: **Uyghur-Chinese bilingual texts**. Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 80v°. ³

Book 18: **Mongolian-Chinese bilingual texts**. Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 60v°.

Book 19: **Jurchen-Chinese bilingual texts**. Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 40v°.

¹ Hirth (1887) considered this book, “a vocabulary of 881 words belonging to the language of the Jurchih (Nü-chih or Nü-chên [i.e. 女真]) Tartars” to be “by far the most important” part of the manuscript. Only half a century or so earlier, the French sinologist Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat had never seen any specimen of Jurchen writing.

² This is the only book in ‘Hirth Ms. 1’ that is *not* a vocabulary or a bilingual text collection. It is a syllabary: a list of vowel and consonant letters, with or without diacritics. There are no words and no translations. What use had this syllabary and why is it part of this *yiyu* collection? Hirth (1887) describes it as “a Sanskrit syllabary, probably a fragment taken from a Purāna [an ancient Hindu Vedic text], as has been suggested by Rémusat in connection with the corresponding portion of the Paris manuscript.” This is a bit imprecise, as Sanskrit is not a script, but a language, that has historically been written in various scripts, such as Devanagari, Gupta, Gujarati, Siddham, Bengali, or Tamil, which are all related to each other (Brahmic family); many are still in use today. From my research so far, I would assume that this syllabary is a kind of ‘guidebook’ on how to write inscriptions in Lantsa script (see Chapter Two for examples of early Ming Lantsa script use).

³ According to Hirth (1887), “Oriental College,” these texts are “credentials presented by Central Asiatic tribute missions to the Court of China (...). The forty addresses contained in this volume came from Khamil [Hami in today’s eastern Xinjiang, called Kumul in Uyghur and Khamil in Mongolian], Ho-chou [today’s Linxia 臨夏 in Gansu; once known as Hezhou 河州, for centuries one of the cultural, religious and commercial centres of China’s Muslim community], Turfan, Kao’ch’ang [Gaochang 高昌], and other places in Central Asia.”

Vol. 6:

Book 20: **Tibetan-Chinese bilingual texts.** Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 60v°.

Book 21: **“*Babai* 八百”-Chinese bilingual texts.** Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 60v°.

Book 22: **“*Bayi* 巴夷”-Chinese bilingual texts.** Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 35v°.

Book 23: **Persian-Chinese bilingual texts.** Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 32v°.

Book 24: **Thai-Chinese bilingual texts.** Length: fol. 1r° - fol. 80v°.

II. Inspection of the Bureau of Translators (c.1580)

- (1) “Mongolian department” (*Dada guan* 韃靼館); p. 1.
 - (1) “Uriankhai” (*Wuliangha* 兀良哈), a.k.a. Wulianghai 烏梁海, a Mongol confederation; p. 16.
- (2) “*Huihui* (‘Muslim’ = Persian) department” (*Huihui guan* 回回館); p. 20.
 - (1) Samarkand (*Sama’erhan* 撒馬兒罕); p. 21.
 - (2) Mecca / ‘Arabia’ (*Tianfang* 天方); p. 25.
 - (3) Turfan (*Tulufan* 土魯番); p. 26.
 - (4) Champa (*Zhancheng* 占城) [sic!]; p. 29.
 - (5) Japan (*Riben* 日本) [sic!]; p. 32.
 - (6) Java (*Guawa* 瓜哇); p. 40.
 - (7) Cambodia (*Zhenla* 真臘) [sic!]; p. 43.
 - (8) Malacca (*Manlajia* 滿刺加); p. 44.
- (3) “Tibetan department” (*Xifan guan* 西番館); p. 51.
- (4) “Uyghur department” (*Gaochang guan* 高昌館); p. 54.
 - (1) Hami (*Hami* 哈密) (Uyghur: Kumul), p. 55.
 - (2) Anding 安定 and Aduan 阿端 garrisons in Gansu, p. 67.
 - (3) Dianxian 典先, a garrison in Gansu, p. 67.⁴
 - (4) Handong 罕東, a garrison in Gansu, p. 68.
 - (5) Luchen 魯陳 (not identified yet), p. 69.
 - (6) Yilibali 亦力把力 = Ilibalik = Kucha in modern Xinjiang, p. 70.⁵
 - (7) Heiqi 黑妻, p. 71. (not identified yet)
- (5) “Hundred barbarians department” (*Baiyi guan* 百夷館) = Languages of today’s Yunnan and surrounding areas.
 - (1) Mengyang 孟養, p. 73.⁶ One part of the former Tai polity Baiyi / Mong Mao. Today northern Burma.
 - (2) Mengding 孟定, p. 74. One part of the former Tai polity Baiyi / Mong Mao.
 - (3) Nandian 南甸, p. 75. Compare Miandian 緬甸 = Burma.
 - (4) Ganya 干崖, p. 75. One part of the former Tai polity Baiyi / Mong Mao.
 - (5) Longchuan 隴川, p. 76.
 - (6) Weiyuan 威遠, p. 76.
 - (7) Wandian 灣甸, p. 77. One part of the former Tai polity Baiyi / Mong Mao.
 - (8) Zhenkang 鎮康, p. 77.
 - (9) Dahou 大侯, p. 78. One part of the former Tai polity Baiyi / Mong Mao.
 - (10) Mangshi 芒市, p. 78.
 - (11) Jingdong 景東, p. 79.

⁴ Anding 安定, Aduan 阿端, and Dianxian 典先 were garrisons in what is today Gansu province, part of the “Guanxi bawei 關西八衛,” a system of eight garrisons (*wei* 衛) established by the Hongwu administration in 1397.

⁵ The first sentences of this section identify the place clearly: “Ilibalik is located in the desert. It is also called Yanqi or Qiuci. In Yuan times, it was called Bishbalik” [亦力把力在沙漠間。或曰焉耆。或曰龜茲。元時別失八里]. Qiuci was an ancient Buddhist Silk Road kingdom; it is located in present day Aksu Prefecture, Xinjiang, China

⁶ I have not been able yet to identify all geographical termini of this section. Apparently, many or all of them are transcriptions of Tai-Kadai words. Chin. *meng* certainly transcribes the *muang* (‘district; country’) of several Tai-Kadai languages (compare *Muang Thai* = Thailand; *Muang Xing* = a district of Laos, etc.).

- (12) Heqing 鶴慶, in present day Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture (*Dali Baizu zizhizhou* 大理白族自治州), southern Yunnan, China.
- (13) Zheyuedian (Zheledian?) 者樂甸, p. 80.
- (6) “Burmese department” (*Miandian guan* 緬甸館), p. 80.
- (7) “Indian department” (*Xitian guan* 西天館), p. 84.
- (8) “Chiang Mai department” (*Babai guan* 八百館), p. 86. The first late Ming addition.
- (1) Laos (Laowo 老撾), p. 88.
- (2) Cheli 車里, p. 88 (not identified yet).
- (3) Menggen 孟艮, p. 89 (not identified yet).
- (9) “Thai department” (*Xianluo guan* 暹羅館), p. 90. Second late Ming addition; added to the *Bureau of Translators* in the very moment the present source was compiled.

III. Regulations for the Bureau of Translators (1630)

- (1) “Establishment [of the *Bureau of Translators*]” [建設]. 13 pages.
- (2) “Appointments” [選授]. 14 pages.
- (3) “Regulations” [典制]. 9 pages.
- (4) “Education and training” [訓規]. 12 pages.
- (5) “Etiquette for officials” [官方]. 9 pages.
- (6) “Names of supervisors” [本堂題]. 36 pages.
- (7) “Staff” [屬官]. 53 pages.
- (8) “Salaries” [俸廩]. 17 pages.
- (9) “Funds/Expenses” [經費]. 14 pages.
- (10) “Ceremonies and rites” [儀注]. 23 pages.
- (11) “Various Records” [雜記]. 5 pages.
- (12) “Official records. Submitted memorials (I)” [文史。題奏類一]. 65 pages.
- (13) “Official records. Submitted memorials (II)” [文史。題奏類二]. 53 pages.
- (14) “Official records. Communications” [文史。公移類]. 60 pages.
- (15) “Official records. Codes of conduct” [文史。條約]. 33 pages.
- (16) “Official records. Hall Instructions” [文史。樹宗類]. 9 pages.
- (17) “Official records. Prefaces” [文史。序類]. 12 pages.
- (18) “Official records. Stele inscriptions” [文史。記類]. 9 pages.
- (19) “Official records. Moral instructions” [文史。箴類]. 5 pages.
- (20) “Official records. Poetry” [文史。詩類]. 20 pages.

APPENDIX E: Prosopography of early Ming language mediators

Notes

1. Individuals are sorted according to the translation environments that have been distinguished in the thesis (and alphabetically for convenience), thus this table consists of: **I. Glossaries:** Producing basic tools (glossaries, *yiyu*). **II. Diplomacy:** Enabling diplomatic communication. **III. Public relations:** Composing imperial proclamations for erection inside and outside the empire. **IV. Literature:** Translating ‘scientific’ treatises and foreign literature. N.b. that people can appear in more than one part of the table (translation environment) but every number is clearly assigned to only one person.
2. Keep in mind that names are not an absolute criterion: That means, a person named ‘Abdullāh can *theoretically* well be a Mongol, a person called Guo Chongli is not *necessarily* of Chinese descent, etc.
3. The main criterion for the inclusion of people was whether or not they were ‘involved’ in any translation or interpreting practices in a significant manner. As some persons called ‘translators’ in the Chinese primary sources were monolingual, individual multilingualism (usually the defining characteristic of a translator) was not a main ‘condition of admission’ into the table.
4. Appendix E gives, for every person, in columns from left to right:
 1. a unique number (1, 2, 3...) for reference (note that some people appear in more than one table);
 2. the name of this person in Chinese-language sources;
 3. the label ‘Chinese’ *or* ‘foreign’ (is the name, by all appearances, of Chinese or of foreign origin?);
 4. the probable original form of the name, *if* the name is of foreign origin;
 5. some basic notes regarding this person.

I. Glossaries

1	Huo Yuanjie 火原潔 (fl. 1382-1389)	Foreign	Khoninchi	Born in China, of Mongolian descent. Bilingual competence in both Chinese and Mongolian, spoken and written. Involved in the compilation of the <i>Sino-Barbarian Translations and Transcriptions</i> (Chinese-Mongolian glossary). In 1376, still going under the Mongolian name Huonichi 火你赤 (a transliteration of Khoninchi), he became a compiler in the Hanlin Academy. Subsequently, his name was changed to He Zhuang 霍莊. At the same time, he was known as Huo Yuanjie 火原潔, a slightly sinicised form of his native Mongolian name.
2	Jiang 蔣 (fl. 1407)	Chinese	—	The <i>Regulations for the Bureau of Translators</i> state that in 1407 thirty-eight students of the Imperial Academy (<i>Guozi jian</i>) were chosen to practice the translation of foreign scripts. Two students are named: Jiang 蔣 and Li 禮. However, these very common family names are all the sources reveal. Compiling glossaries was one of the main tasks of the Bureau.
3	Li 禮 (fl. 1407)	Chinese	—	Student of the Imperial Academy who, in 1407, was chosen to practice the translation of foreign scripts at the <i>Bureau of Translators</i> . See no. 2 above.
4	Liu Sanwu 刘三吾 (fl. 1389)	Chinese	—	Author of a preface to the <i>Sino-Barbarian Translations and Transcriptions</i> in which he presents this Mongolian-Chinese glossary to a Chinese scholar-official audience.

5	Ma Deluding 馬得魯丁	Foreign	?	Muslim astronomer who came to China around 1369, according to genealogical material. Given name Qin 欽; courtesy name Yanming 彥明. Father of the translators Ma Hama (no. 22) and Ma Shayihe (no. 6). The <i>Great Observer Scroll</i> states that Ma Deluding held a post at the <i>Bureau of Translators</i> in the Hongwu era. N.b., however, that the Bureau was not yet founded in that time. The assertion as such seems plausible though; the source might be pointing to some precursor of the <i>Bureau of Translators</i> (or to the <i>Bureau of Interpreters</i> which did exist under Hongwu).
6	Ma Shayihe 馬沙亦黑 (fl. 1382- c.1389)	Foreign	Sheikh شَيْخ Ma	Involved in the translation of astronomy from Persian into Chinese in the 1380s (<i>Book on Heavenly Patterns</i>); further involved in the compilation of the <i>Sino-Barbarian Translations</i> . Son of the astronomer Ma Deluding (no. 5), brother of the translator Ma Hama (no. 22). Courtesy name Zhongde 仲德. According to the <i>Addendum to 'Resolving the Doubts about Islam,'</i> he was also serving as an interpreter for the Chinese envoy Chen Cheng (no. 8). “Shayihe” is certainly a transcription of the honorific <i>sheikh</i> (Pers. <i>sheykh</i> شَيْخ; Ar. <i>shaykh</i> شَيْخ), just as Dieliyueshi 迭里月實 is a transcription of the honorific <i>dervish</i> (see above), either <i>meaning</i> the honorific or adapting it as an auspicious name.

II. Diplomacy

7	Bo'arxintai 白阿兒忻台 (fl. 1407)	Foreign	?	Interpreter-cum-envoy who led a Yongle embassy to Samarkand in 1407.
8	Chen Cheng 陳誠 (1365-1457)	Chinese	—	Chinese Hanlin official who travelled to the Western Regions, especially Herat (modern Afghanistan), and compiled a mini Persian-Chinese glossary in 1414-1415.
9	Fei Xin 費信 (c.1385- after 1436)	Chinese	—	Soldier and interpreter for fleet commander Zheng He on the third, sixth, and seventh expeditions; proficient in Arabic (Tan Ta Sen 2009: 171). Author of the eyewitness account <i>Xingcha Shenglan</i> 星槎勝覽 [<i>Overall Survey of the Star Raft</i>] which was strongly influenced by a similar account written by the translator Ma Huan.
10	Gongge-suonan 貢哥瑣南 (fl. 1370)	Foreign	?	The <i>Veritable Records of the Hongwu Era</i> (25 August 1370) note that he was an interpreter-introducer (<i>tongshi sheren</i> 通事舍人), sent to the Western Regions. His name is apparently Mongolian.
11	Guo Chongli 郭崇礼	Chinese	—	Muslim Chinese interpreter for fleet commander Zheng He on the fourth, sixth, and seventh expeditions; proficient in Arabic and/or Persian (Tan Ta Sen 2009: 172).

12	Hasan 哈三 (fl. 1413-1415)	Foreign	Hasan حسن	Interpreter-cum-advisor for fleet commander Zheng He on the fourth expedition. Imam of the Great Mosque in Xi'an; apparently personally invited by Zheng He. Proficient in Arabic and/or Persian (Chang Kuei-sheng 1976: 198; Tan Ta Sen 2009: 172). Hasan 哈三 is a standard Chinese transcription for Hasan حسن and we find many more examples from the Ming and Qing dynasties. In “Hirth. Ms. 1” an envoy from Hami named Hasan 哈三 appears. One of the many descendants of Ma Deluding (father of the translators Ma Shayihe and Ma Hama) is called Ma Hasan 馬哈三 (see last lines of the <i>Great Observer Scroll</i>).
13	Mahama 馬哈麻 (fl. 1371)	Foreign	Muhamma d محمد	Interpreter. The <i>Veritable Records of the Ming</i> note that he was sent to the Western Regions in 1371. Could theoretically be the same person as the <i>Book on Heavenly Patterns</i> translator Ma Hama—but they could just as well be two different persons, particularly so as Mahama 馬哈麻 is a common transcription of Muhammad, one of the most popular Muslim names. A SCRIPTA corpus analysis for the <i>Veritable Records of the Ming</i> alone yields 76 hits for “馬哈麻” (in this spelling, there will probably be variant forms as well).
14	Ma Huan 馬歡 (c.1380-1460)	Chinese	—	Chinese Muslim and interpreter/translator for fleet commander Zheng He on the fourth, sixth, and seventh expeditions. Proficient in Persian and/or Arabic. Native of Kuaiji 会稽 in Zhejiang, i.e. modern Shaoxing 紹興. Author of <i>Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores</i> , an important eyewitness account of the voyages. States about his role in Zheng He's expeditions that he “had the duty to translate foreign documents” [以通譯番書]. A.k.a. Zongdao 宗道.
15	Yishiha 亦失哈 (fl.1409-1451)	Foreign	Yishiha	Bilingual (Chinese-Jurchen) eunuch-official-envoy. A Jurchen captured by the Ming military; probably learned Chinese in the Imperial harem. Erected a trilingual stele (Chinese-Jurchen-Mongolian) in the northern borderlands. Yishiha 亦失哈 is a Chinese transcription of his Jurchen name.

III. Public relations

16	Alubuhua 阿魯不花 (fl. 1413)	Foreign	?	A Mongol who translated the Chinese part of Yishiha's (no. 15) trilingual stele into Mongolian. His name must be Mongolian but the original form is unclear.
15	Yishiha 亦失哈 (fl.1409-1451)	Foreign	Yishiha	Bilingual (Chinese-Jurchen) eunuch-official-envoy. A Jurchen captured by the Ming military; probably learned Chinese in the Imperial harem. Erected a trilingual stele (Chinese-Jurchen-Mongolian) in the northern borderlands. Yishiha 亦失哈 is a Chinese transcription of his Jurchen name.

IV. Literature

17	Adawuding 阿答兀丁 (fl.1382-1383)	Foreign	Ala-ud-din علاء الدين (?)	Yuan-era <i>Islamic Astronomical Bureau</i> staff member, taken over by the Ming in 1368. Later involved in the translation of astronomy/astrology from Persian into Chinese (1380s). N.b. that Adawuding and Haydar (no. 20) are the only two individuals appearing at the beginning of the Ming as <i>Islamic Astronomical Bureau</i> staff members and as translators involved in the translation of the <i>Book on Heavenly Patterns</i> (there were probably more but only these two are ‘seizable’).
18	Adula 阿都刺 (fl. 1368)	Foreign	‘Abdullāh عبد الله	Yuan-era <i>Islamic Astronomical Bureau</i> staff member, taken over by the Ming in 1368. It is unclear at the moment if he also acted as a language mediator (in the way Adawuding [no. 17] and Haydar [no. 20] did); however, as this is a quite probable, he will stay in this table for the time being (together with the similar cases Dieliyueshi [no. 19] and Zheng Ali [no. 24]). The form given in the sources is 阿都刺, i.e. “Aduci.” I am quite certain, however, that this is a corrupt form of Adula 阿都刺 (the characters <i>la</i> 刺 and <i>ci</i> 刺 positively crying out to be confused), a transliteration of ‘Abdullāh.
19	Dieliyueshi 迭里月實 (fl. 1368)	Foreign	Darwish درویش (?)	Yuan-era <i>Islamic Astronomical Bureau</i> staff member, taken over by the Ming in 1368. It is unclear at the moment if he also acted as a language mediator (in the way Adawuding [no. 17] and Haydar [no. 20] did); however, as this is a quite probable, he will stay in this list for the time being (together with the similar cases ‘Abdullāh [no. 18] and Zheng Ali [no. 24]). Dieliyueshi 迭里月實 is probably a transcription of Dervish درویش, a title for a Sufi ascetic which could also serve as a name. This is corroborated through the Persian glossary of the early Ming envoy Chen Cheng (no. 8) who defines the Persian word “ <i>dielimishi</i> 迭里迷失” (phonetically extremely similar to Dieliyueshi 迭里月實) as a man who has abandoned his home and possessions and is wandering around, praying and begging for alms: decidedly the definition of a dervish.
20	Haida’er 海達兒 (fl. 1368-1383)	Foreign (7)	Haydar حیدر	<i>Islamic Astronomical Bureau</i> staff, taken over by Ming in 1368; involved in the translation of astronomy from Persian into Chinese in the 1380s. His name appears in the sources in two forms: (1) Haida’er 海達兒 (2) Heidi’er 黑的兒 Both are certainly transcriptions of the common Arabic given name Haydar حیدر. N.b. that Haida’er and Adawuding (no. 17) are the only two individuals appearing at the beginning of the Ming as <i>Islamic Astronomical Bureau</i> staff members and as translators involved in the translation of the <i>Book on Heavenly Patterns</i> . (There were probably more but only these two are ‘seizable.’)

21	Li Chong 李翀 (fl. 1382-1383)	Chinese (5)	—	Involved in the translation of astronomy from Persian into Chinese in the 1380s. Monolingual Chinese scholar-official. His responsibility was to render an oral translation—given in a Chinese vernacular by a Persian speaker—into literary Chinese.
22	Ma Hama 馬哈麻 (fl. 1382-1389)	Foreign (11)	Muhammad محمد	Involved in the translation of astronomy from Persian into Chinese in the 1380s. Son of Ma Deluding (no. 5), brother of the translator Ma Shayihe (no. 6). Courtesy name Zhongliang 仲良.
6	Ma Shayihe 馬沙亦黑 (fl. 1382-c.1389)	Foreign	Sheikh شيخ Ma	Involved in the translation of astronomy from Persian into Chinese in the 1380s (<i>Book on Heavenly Patterns</i>); further involved in the compilation of the <i>Sino-Barbarian Translations and Transcriptions</i> . Son of the astronomer Ma Deluding (no. 5), brother of the translator Ma Hama (no. 22). Courtesy name Zhongde 仲德. According to the <i>Addendum to 'Resolving the Doubts about Islam,'</i> he was also serving as an interpreter for the Chinese envoy Chen Cheng (no. 8). For further details, see no. 6 in part I of this table.
23	Wu Bozong 吳伯宗 (1334-1384)	Chinese (9)	—	Monolingual Chinese scholar-official, involved in the Persian-to-Chinese translation of astronomical treatises in the 1380s. Author of a preface to the <i>Book on Heavenly Patterns</i> (1383) in which he presents this translation to a Chinese scholar-official audience. Native of Jiangxi. High official at the Hanlin Academy; since 1382 Grand Academician in the Hall of Military Glory [武英殿大學士].
24	Zheng Ali 鄭阿里 (fl.1368)	Foreign (15)	Ali علي Zheng	Yuan-era <i>Islamic Astronomical Bureau</i> staff member, taken over by the Ming in 1368. It is unclear if he also acted as a language mediator (in the way Adawuding [no. 17] and Ḥaydar [no. 20] did); however, as this is a quite probable, he will stay in this table for the time being (together with the similar cases ‘Abdullāh [no. 18] and Dieliyueshi [no. 19]).