

# *Analysis on Deeply Derogatory Terms in the Chinese Language*

## *—Taking Man Yi as an Example*

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**Abstract:** One of the many types of concurrent meanings of words is the positive and negative concomitant meaning of words, which represents the positive and negative attitudes of the linguistic community about the accompanying rational meanings of words. There are numerous sorts of concomitant meanings of words. The notion of extremely derogatory terms proposed by Tirrell gave rise to a brand new category of words as well as an innovative approach to the study of slurs. The paper does a literature analysis to investigate deeply derogatory terms in Chinese, and then it uses that information to examine the Chinese word "Man Yi". It solves the problem of the theory's inability to adapt to China's circumstances.

**Keywords:** deeply derogatory term, Chinese language, slurs, social embedding

## 1. Introduction

Professor Lynne Tirrell used social practice to highlight why some words are powerful and detrimental in her essay about the Rwandan genocide after years of research on the subject. She came to the conclusion that a new category of the word should be called "deeply derogatory terms" [1]. It is distinct from the slurs, such as the typical jerk that is referred to in the slurs. It is possible that it will hurt or insult, but it does not have the same weight as terms that are extremely disparaging.

The Chinese character "Man Yi" will be broken down and analyzed using the deeply derogatory game model developed by Tirrell. There are a total of 56 different ethnic groups in China, 55 of which are considered to be ethnic minorities. The author belongs to Mongolian ethnic group, which is considered to be one of China's ethnic minorities. With a heart for exploring language and culture, the author through a method of literature analysis designs to analyze the Chinese character "Man Yi" in Chinese language. A discussion on the reasons why this word was considered offensive in ancient Chinese and why it has grown so prevalent in modern society will be carried out in this paper.

## 2. The Reasons of “Man Yi” Being a Deeply Derogatory Term

Old Chinese idiom "Hua Yi Zhi Bian" refers to the distinction between "Hua Xia" and "Man Yi." Huaxia refers to China. "Under the sage authority of the king, all of his subjects are Chinese. This is the land known as "Hua Xia," where people dress with dignity, exercise filial piety, love and respect the elderly, and adhere to moral standards of personal and societal behaviour. "Man Yi" translates to "barbarian tribes," which refers to tribes that are untamed and uncivilized.

According to Tirrell's Language games theory, the author discovered during the investigation that "Man Yi" has already become a term of extreme contempt [1]. In the pragmatist realm of social life, the term "Man Yi" has acquired a regional discrimination-related meaning. Regional discrimination in China is defined as "prejudice towards persons based on their origins, ethnicity, sub-ethnicity, language, dialect, or present provincial zones" [2].

China has a wide land and a large population, which leads to a predominance of regional understandings of the population. In addition, China's policies make it impossible for a person to live outside of his province of birth, which would enhance his knowledge of other locations. The Chinese term "Man Yi" denotes provincial zone and cultural inequality.

There are four essential characteristics of deeply derogatory terms. The first characteristic is labeled in/out-group. When "Man Yi" is used, it always refers to individuals from the northern provinces of the Yangtze river, particularly those from northeastern China. They discriminated against others using a term that also refers to ethnic minorities. In brief, the "out-groups" consist of northern provinces residents and ethnic minorities separated by the Yangtze River [2].

The second characteristic is negative essentialization. The book of the Han dynasty, a historical chronicle of the Han dynasty, stated, "The 'Man Yi' from the north are like weather-altering storms [2]. They are neither subduable nor naturalizable. They occupy the vast northern meadows. Their lifestyle is no better than that of animals." This paper reflects the majority of Han people's perspective on "Man Yi" at the time. It also explains historically why the word assumes biological distinctions, which therefore assumes inevitable social and moral inequalities.

The third characteristic is socially integrated. We cannot invert the logical structure of the problem. The social difference reinforces the discriminational problem, but the discriminational problem does not cause the social difference [2]. Since the Song Dynasty, the south has been economically and culturally superior to the north. There are three explanations for economic inequalities in the northeast. The first argument is that the ancient Chinese regime was headquartered in the north. Owing to the influence of the conflict, the economy in the north of the country is experiencing a gradual decline, but the economy in the south is developing slowly but reasonably smoothly; economic development is in a condition of consistent progress. The second point is that ancient southern Chinese kings placed a premium on economic growth and created the southern economy. The third factor is that due to its geographical location, the south offers favorable water and temperature conditions. Relative to the northern region, the south's natural circumstances are superior and more conducive to agriculture [3].

In the field of education, from the Tang to the Qing dynasties, the geographical distribution of the number of champions who get the first prize in the imperial examinations shows a gradual movement from the north to the south. During this time, there were 194 champions; 26 of them were from the north, or 13.4% of the total; 168 champions were from the south, or 86.6% [3]. The champion of southern origin has amassed an overwhelming numerical advantage. Massive economic, intellectual, and cultural inequalities provided fertile ground for discrimination against northern populations.

The fourth characteristic is action-inducing. In contrast to the situation in Rwanda, the attitude towards northern minorities in old texts and history books is dictatorial and disdainful; the word

"Man Yi" was used to characterize northern minorities as a term of scorn. In China's history, however, the rule founded by the southern Han people rarely perpetrated massacres against the northern minorities, and more erected military defenses against the invasion of ethnic minorities, the most notable of which was the Great Wall [4]. The vast northern grasslands will likely always produce the world's fiercest cavalry, and the nomadic production system is difficult to alter. In ancient China, the discrimination of the Han against the northern minorities did not result in a massacre.

When the term was initially coined, it was not in any sense derogatory. In the earliest stages of Chinese cultural development, "Man Yi" only referred to semantic variations based on location. The legendary monarch of the north, Xiong Qu, referred to himself as "Man Yi". With the emergence of numerous countries in the Central Plains, a sense of identity began to emerge. During this period, Confucius and other scholars from the Central Plains advocated supporting the Central Plains monarchy and rejecting the "Man Yi". Since then, "Man Yi" once had the pragmatic connotation of discrimination [4].

### **3. The Evolution of "Man Yi" in Different Time**

In the preceding paragraph, the author explains why "Man Yi" is a profoundly offensive phrase and not merely a slur. In current society, however, the Chinese term "Man Yi" is less destructive than it was in ancient China. Its Mandarin counterpart, "Man zi" or "Man ren," appears in numerous regional dialects. The paper shall explain why this word is less offensive in two-dimensional space and time. The purpose of the next paragraphs is to discuss the modification of the features.

#### **3.1. The Evolution of "Man Yi" in Ancient China**

Ancient China serves as the initial time period. Because of efforts to integrate different groups, discrimination against northern ethnic minorities by southern Han has decreased significantly. It eliminates the divide that exists between the northern and southern regions, which is characterized by a "marked in/out-group" structure and "negatively essentializing" decline in performance. Integration of people from different ethnic backgrounds occurs in both directions [5].

Reforms instituted by Emperor Xiaowen of the Northern Wei dynasties are an example of northerners taking the initiative to incorporate with southerners. When this happened, it marked a turning point in China's past. The governmental reforms instituted during the reign of Emperor Xiaowen of Northern Wei are referred to as "the reforms of Emperor Xiaowen of Northern Wei," also known as the Sinicization of Xiaowen. The average field system, the rent modulation system, official system and decree reform, the relocation of the capital to Luo Yang (in the south central plain), and the adoption of plain central customs were all crucial to the Sinicization movement. It was around that time when multiethnic communities began to emerge as the norm. Xiaowen, as emperor, continued this pattern. The Xianbei (Emperor Xiaowen's tribe) and other northern ethnic minorities eventually became part of the Han ethnic group during the active assimilation of Emperor Xiaowen and later development. The Xianbei's new methods of production and way of life sparked a cultural shift that saw the Han people's traditions and practices become the backbone of everyday life. The chinesization of the North's ethnic minorities was already well underway at the time of Emperor Xiaowen of Northern Wei's reform. If one believes Northern Wei's History, at least 200,000 people from various ethnic minorities in the north voluntarily surrendered seven times to the Han rule in the south [6]. In addition, southwest Ningzhou is home to 19 ethnic minority tribes, including the Xianzhi, Chile, Qianqu, Lixiang, and Helai. As previously stated, the Huaihe River separates the north and south of China. Not just the change in status, but also, like Emperor

Xiaowen's reforms, the comprehensive study of Han culture by ethnic minorities in the north eradicated distinctions [7].

The Han Dynasty's harmonious marriage and commerce contacts with northern ethnic minorities are an example of the southern people taking the initiative to merge with the northern people. In Engel's book "The Genesis of the Family, Private Property and the State," he writes, "For the king himself, marriage was a political act, an opportunity to expand his power through fresh marriages; It is the family lineage's interests that are decisive, not the individual's decision". The peace relations of the Han dynasty adhered to the same philosophy. Even though the south is superior to the north in many economic, educational, and cultural spheres, the invasion of ethnic minorities in the north has weakened the southern regime's ability to cope. Beginning with the Han Dynasty, peaceful marriage flourished during the Sui and Tang dynasties. According to preliminary statistics, there were 16 peaceful marriages with political leaders and relatives of northern ethnic minorities such as the Xiongnu, Wusun, and Shanshan during the 213 years of the Western Han Dynasty, and 28 peaceful marriages with political leaders of border ethnic groups such as the Tuyuhun, Khitan, Hui, Tubo, Tuqishi, Xi, and Ningyuan 289 years after the establishment of the Tang Dynasty [6]. The objective of the monarchs of the southern provinces was to strengthen their own political standing and to expand the political influence of their ethnic groups. Peace marriage diminished the effectiveness of the characteristic "negatively essentializing" [6]. The principle of blood inferiority can no longer be used to justify the mixing of royal blood.

### 3.2. The Evolution of “Man Yi” in Modern China

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, a second temporal dimension emerged in modern Chinese society. The Chinese Communist Party identifies five defining characteristics of ethnic policy and ethnic concerns [5]. First, opportunities and challenges created by reform and opening up coexist with the socialist market economy. Second, ethnic regions coexist with accelerated economic development and low-level development. Third, the Chinese national community is yet weakly constructed and coexists. Fourth, the tendency of contacts between many ethnic groups is on the rise. Conflicts and contradictions involving ethnic elements are increasing and coexisting. Fifth, capacity-building for vital public services in areas inhabited by ethnic minorities is deficient. The Chinese government has placed these four ethnic minority concerns at the top of its list of most pressing concerns. In order to safeguard the fundamental rights and interests of ethnic minorities, one of the most well-known policies, regional policy, was developed. Regional ethnic autonomy ensures the equal position and equal rights of ethnic minorities in politics and mostly satisfies the desire of all ethnic minorities to fully engage in the country's political life [7]. Following the principle of regional ethnic autonomy, a nation may establish a separate autonomous area in an area inhabited by its ethnic group, or it may establish multiple ethnic autonomous areas with different administrative units in other parts of the country according to its distribution. The practice of regional ethnic autonomy not only protects the right of ethnic minorities to be in charge of their own affairs, but it also preserves the unity of the nation. The practice of regional ethnic autonomy is conducive to integrating the state's principles and policies with the particular conditions of minority areas, integrating the country's development with the development of ethnic minorities, and maximizing the benefits of all elements. This approach grants cultural identity to ethnic minorities in the North and equal authority in economic and political spheres to ethnic minority groups [7]. In the section on social embedding, the distinction between economics and culture shrinks.

## 4. Conclusion

This study examines why the term "Man Yi" is damaging in the given setting from four perspectives derived from Tirrell's theory: marked in-group/out-group, negatively essentializing, socially anchored, and action-engendering. It is reasonable to regard the Chinese term "Man Yi" to be a fundamentally disparaging epithet, as the author can confidently conclude. Concurrently, the paper detects a disparity between Tirrell's idea and the actual scenario. Action-generating situations are not usually as terrible as the Rwanda Genocide.

In central part two, in contemporary society, the Chinese term "Man Yi" is less destructive than in ancient China. the author suspects that Tirrell's characteristics that are associated with the word "Man Yi" have changed. From the North Wei dynasty through the formation of the People's Republic of China, the author cited numerous examples to substantiate my forecast. Ethnic integration has drastically reduced discrimination against northern ethnic minorities by southern Han people, and eliminate the divisions between the north and south, as well as "Marked in/out-group" and "negatively essentializing" characteristics. The Chinese government's new strategy grants ethnic minority groups equal authority in the economic and political spheres. In social embedding, the distinction between economic and cultural factors becomes negligible and can be disregarded.

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