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English as Eastern: Zhuang, Mongolian, Mandarin, and English in the linguistic orders of globalized China

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Abstract: Socially constructed and globally propagated East-West binaries have influenced language ideologies about English in the People’s Republic of China (PRC), but they are not hegemonic. This essay explores how East-West language ideologies are reformed in mergers with Mandarin-minority language ideologies. It discusses two separate but similar recent studies of minority language speakers and language ideologies in the PRC, respectively by Grey and Baioud. Each study reveals aspects of how Mandarin and English are being socially constructed as on the same side of a dichotomous and hierarchic linguistic and social order, in contradistinction to minority languages. The essay thus problematizes the construction of English as a Western language and Mandarin as an Eastern language; both in academic discourses and in wider social and political discourses. The essay uses Asif Agha’s theory of “enregisterment” to unify the points drawn from each study. It concludes that the language ideologies and practices/discourses under examination reproduce the displacement of a subaltern status; we describe this process as dynamic, internal Orientalism and “recursive” Orientalism, drawing on foundational theory of language ideologies. This essay paves the way for further studies of recursive Orientalism.

Keywords: agency and stylization; discourse; enregistered signs; ethnic minorities/minzu; Guangxi Zhuangzu Autonomous Region; Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region; linguo-social order; orientalism

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and English as being on *the same* side of a dichotomous and hierarchic linguistic and social order, in contradistinction to minority languages.

Having addressed similar sociolinguistic research problems at similar times with similar theoretical foundations, we decided that it would be helpful to investigate whether Baioud's (2018) study of another large minority language in the PRC, Mongolian, bore out, added nuance to, or contradicted, the argument that Mandarin and English are co-constitutive of a centrist, majority language identity, rather than oppositional, with a marginal, minority language identity serving as the antithesis. This article therefore discusses findings from the first author's ethnography of language policy conducted in relation to Zhuang in the south of the PRC as well as the second author's ethnographic study of Mongolian and Mandarin in contemporary weddings in the Inner Mongolia region of northern PRC. Both studies illuminate the reconstruction of East-West and Chinese-English binary ideologies in multilingual sociolinguistic environments of the PRC.

This is an analytic foray into a new idea that has the potential to shape future research, rather than a report of how the data in each of our studies responded to those studies' own research questions. In this joint endeavor, we refocus both studies on beliefs about English and their place within Orientalism in the PRC. We problematize the construction of English as a Western language; in particular, we problematize the academic literature which presupposes or imposes this belief about English without allowing for varied beliefs about English and its relationship to spatial and personal identities to emerge from research. We use Agha's theory of enregisterment to unify points drawn from each study (see further Section 2).

1.1 Global discourses of Easts and Wests

The current age of globalization has not stopped symbolically powerful discourses that map a binary imagined geography onto a European West and an Asian East in the paradigmatic Orientalist manner. Rather, globalization facilitates the spread of paradigmatic Orientalist discourses (see Grey et al. 2021), although it also allows for contrary discourses to spread, too. We accept that there is variability in what "the West" means and where it is understood to be located, and likewise "the East", but at the same time a strongly-entrenched construction of West and East as inherently different, oppositional, and hierarchically ordered prevails in global discourses (see e.g. Goldstein-Gidoni [1993] on these discourses in Japan; Vukovich [2012] on global "Sinological-orientalism"; Said's [1978: 201–284] "Orientalism Now"; and Melegh [2006: 9] on the hierarchical East-West dichotomy as localized even within contemporary Europe). We draw attention to the fact that even as the PRC has ascended to global power in the current era, a binary East-West

imaginary is being reproduced because it is in the interests of both geopolitical poles to maintain their oppositional identities. Further, Orientalist discourses have arisen within Asia, recursively re-mapping a center-periphery hierarchy from the global scale onto socio-linguo hierarchies which are particular to local scales (see further Dirlik [1996]; and on “recursive” language ideology more generally, see Irvine and Gal [2000: 38]). For example, Asian colonial and imperial powers have “othered” certain “barbaric” and “exotic” subjects and foes (see e.g. Tapp and Cohn [2003] and Bulag [2002] on imperial Chinese Orientalism; and Cho [2020] on Orientalism between imperial Japan and Korea).

Schein’s (2000) “internal Orientalism” captures best the multiple layers of Orientalism within the PRC which we will discuss here. In particular, the displacement of subalternity put forward by Schein (2000) as integral to internal Orientalism is inspiring:

Within twentieth-century China, the nation’s status of subordinate vis-à-vis the rest of the world was assiduously displaced onto peasants, minorities, and women, consolidating a masculinized urban elite that could disavow its painful subalternity on the global scale by redirecting the focus onto internal difference.

(Schein 2000: 233)

She points out that the displacement of subalternity onto minority Miao women in remote villages is done not only by Han-Chinese but also by the local, relatively urbanized Miao themselves. The existence of several layers of subalternity in relation to mobile others is crucial if we are to understand the way in which the dominant East-West discourses are utilized on various levels in local contexts.

Moreover, this oppositional East-West imaginative geography is reproduced even in discourses that seek to invert the hierarchy by placing the East at the center. Orton (2009: 281), for example, explains the discourses of 东华 (“Easternization”) in writings from the PRC. These Easternization discourses use 东 (“the East”) to represent China and are about Chinese technological innovations and Chinese culture having been, and still being, major forces of global influence. Thus, even across these discursive changes in Orientalism, including towards internal Orientalism and Occidentalism, their underlying binary and hierarchic construction has become entrenched.

It is this orthodox, binary hierarchical structure of the ideational space into which the social understanding of languages and peoples are organized which remains important in our studies. Our two studies support the argument that a binary language ideology remains prevalent in the PRC but reveal that English and Mandarin are not necessarily recursively mapped onto opposing sides of it. Rather, we found that English and Mandarin are both being constructed as central

languages, and minority languages as their necessary, peripheral Other. What we are emphasizing is the emergence of English and other symbols of (apparently) modern and advanced Western English-speaking worlds being reworked and woven into the layers of subalternity, and subsequently rendered as symbols or indices of a Han-Chinese-centered East. This article thus contributes to interrogating the recursive mapping of global East-West discourses onto a Chinese-English binary. We show that another ideological mapping may be locally salient: East versus West maps onto ideological structures including rich versus poor, pre-modern versus modern, masculine versus feminine, and Mandarin and English versus Minority languages.

We are therefore theorizing that in the Chinese context, English language ideologies are not only constructed around an imaginative geography of an Asian East and a Euro-American West but also constructed around a localized imaginative geography of Center (specifically, City) and Periphery. This echoes Bolander's (2021) finding that the social significance of English is polysemous amongst Ismailis in Central Asia. Let us now expand our introduction of some of the localized imaginative geographies of language most significant to this article.

1.2 Local discourses of Easts and Wests and their treatment in research literature

A prominent, albeit not necessarily hegemonic, discursive construction within the PRC is that “East” indexes the affluent, highly urbanized and geographically eastern coastal regions of the PRC and “West” indexes the less affluent, less urbanized, less “modernized”, and more ethnically and linguistically diverse western regions of the nation. In this ideology of place, minority languages are out of place in the urbanized Eastern regions of China but English, we have found, is in place. Particularly in (and in reference to) minority regions of the PRC today, the indexical dichotomy of minority languages as traditional/authentic/subordinated and Mandarin as modern/anonymous/dominant is well-established as a widely-held belief, i.e. part of the *doxa* in Bourdieusian terms; an orthodoxy (see further Baranovitch 2003; Gladney 1994).

However, it is important to emphasize that many people who are officially part of the minority groups in the PRC are actually multilingual rather than confined to “their” minority languages. Many people from these ethno-linguistic groups have been multilingual historically, and it became very common to be multilingual in a minority language, a regional Mandarin topolect and Putonghua in the late twentieth century. Nevertheless, a “monolingual mindset” (Clyne 2005) persists in many public discourses – political, educational, media, and academic

discourses – which frame speaking Mandarin/Chinese/Putonghua and speaking a minority language as mutually exclusive. This reproduces the view that each language is essential to a mutually exclusive ethno-cultural identity, as well as reproducing the view that one has to give up a minority language in order to speak Mandarin. These essentialist discourses create an ideational vulnerability or predisposition for mapping languages and peoples onto mutually exclusive places or categories, which we illustrate playing out in reality in Section 3.

For example, in one of the highest-profile edited volumes on the subject, *China and English: Globalisation and the dilemmas of identity* (Lo Bianco et al. 2009), a Chinese ethnosociolinguist of renown, Zhou Qingsheng (2009: 170), declares that “The Han majority as well as the Hui and Man minorities speak Chinese, *but* most of the [55] minority ethnicities speak other languages” (our emphasis). This phrasing is not accidental: Zhou (2009: 175) then affirms an earlier author’s comment that a belief in “the ‘one ethnicity, one language’ correspondence is a very important basis for ethnic identity” in the PRC. We too have seen that it is very important amongst the peoples we have studied. But this does not mean that it is empirically true, in the way that Zhou and others claim, that people officially recognized as minorities speak these “other” languages and do not speak Mandarin. In our view, those academic discourses marginalize minority experiences by re-inscribing Mandarin-Minority (and Mandarin-English) linguistic and identity binaries. Yet they are dominant discourses, although we note as a counter example that Kirkpatrick and Xu (2020) ask whether English is an Asian language in their new book, and we discuss another exception, Xu (2009), below.

Actually, most of the Zhuang minority group speak Mandarin, while a great many also speak Zhuang: they are bilingual or multilingual (see further Grey 2021a; Zhou 2012: 6, 10). It may even be that people counted as speaking “Zhuang” speak a Zhuang-Putonghua hybrid; Lu and Li (2012: 24–34) argue empirically that this is a new, systemic variety but the contention is also supported by linguistic theory acknowledging that Zhuang as well as Mandarin varieties (and all other language varieties) are able and likely to change through contact. Likewise, most of the Mongolian minority are proficient bilingual speakers of Mandarin and Mongolian (Puthuval 2017). Mixing Mandarin with Mongolian in everyday communication is ubiquitous (Schatz 2012). These hybrid linguistic practices and the multilingualism of minority peoples are, however, invisible in the dominant discourses.

Academic and state discourses which construct most ethnic minorities as speaking “their” emblematically differed languages and not speaking the mainstream, national language helps maintain a distinct identity for minority peoples. A distinct identity can be in minority peoples’ individual or group interests *as well as* against their interests. Our purpose here is not to evaluate the discursive construction of distinct ethno-linguistic identities as always liberating and

empowering or always oppressive and marginalizing, but to remind readers that linguistic minorities – even those officially recognized by the state – are discursive constructions, not natural facts (Mullaney 2011; and see further raciolinguistic theory identifying and de-naturalizing such constructions; Rosa and Flores 2017).

And, of course, many people in the PRC today, whether from a minority or the majority group, have some English proficiency or even alacrity for conducting personal or professional communications in English, not least because it has been a compulsory school subject now for at least two decades. However, the common belief and discursive construction that minority peoples and the majority speak different languages from each other, and that linguistic distinction is an essential part of their overall difference from each other, has also deeply informed the political, academic, and media responses to English in the PRC.

Moreover, from this dominant, binary “one ethnicity, one language” outlook, if a person or a people speak both Mandarin and English, they can then only be in a dilemma between two competing linguistic loyalties, between two insoluble imagined selves. Orton (2009) has explained that there have been over one hundred years of prominent discourses in China about the need to learn useful things from the West, including learning English, without letting that learning affect the Chinese identity of individuals or of the nation. China’s current top-down drive to revive traditional culture also rests on an assumption that foreign culture corrodes the essence of Chinese culture (Yang 2017), and this undergirds the debates about English learning (e.g. 教育部前发言人呼吁取消小学英语课救救汉语 [Former spokesperson of the Ministry of Education calls for cancelling primary school English classes to save Chinese] 2013). These English-specific discourses strengthen the general belief that languages and cultural identities must be antithetical and enhance the prestige of Mandarin (which is also propagated by national language laws about language and education policies).

We think this conflictual and binary idea of language and identity elides the huge variation and dynamism between people and even within one person in their identity construction. Moreover, we think this binary view has particularly and systematically marginalized the experiences of minority people in China, in academic, political, and popular discourses, because it leaves minority people very little room within these powerful discursive representations in which to be legitimately comfortable, stable, and normal in their dual identities and their multilingualism. Rather, minority multilingualism is constructed as suspicious and problematic, a threat to the stability of a personal identity and in this way also a national identity and security risk, or simply invisible. The former construction is illustrated by the recent education reform in Inner Mongolia that aims to gradually eliminate Mongolian bilingual schooling and replace it with Mandarin-medium schooling despite the Mongolian minority’s longstanding “model” citizenship

(Atwood 2020; Baioud 2020; and see Grey [2021a] on the general trend to “securitized language policy” in China).

We acknowledge that the ethnic revival after the Cultural Revolution led to increasing scholarship on the representation of minorities and their identity negotiations in the PRC (e.g. Bilik 1998; Jankowiak 2013; Leibold 2015; Mullaney 2011: xxx; Schein 2000; Sneath 2000). However, beliefs about English do not feature in these studies. Separately, the globalization of English has stimulated a scholarly response about English in China, much of which is insightful but approaches English vis-à-vis the Chinese mainstream (e.g. Gao 2015; Leibold and Chen 2014; Pérez-Milans 2013), thus eliding the questions about minority perspectives that we have just raised. Thus, very few of the studies on minority language, ideologies and identities have engaged with the studies on English language, ideologies and identities in the PRC (with the notable exception of Wang 2016). Liang (2015: 179) identified a similar gap in the literature – a dearth of ethnographic studies of contemporary Chinese minority multilingualism – and called in response for research “about coming to terms with challenges imposed by traditional monolingual norms and new demands for heteroglossic language competencies”.

In addition, while not specifically about multilingual minority perspectives, Xu’s (2009) examination of the heteroglossia of English in the PRC in this era of globalization offers an important counterpoint to the academic framing of English as something opposed to Chinese and indexical only of a non-Chinese community. Xu (2009) argues:

English, the lingua franca of today’s world, alters our sense of ownership of the language since the distinctions between learner and user become blurred. In turn, this already profound change tends to obscure the boundaries between the learner of a language and any target language community.

(Xu 2009: 181)

That is, Xu theorizes that ideological space is expanded, through globalization, for Chinese learners and users of English to believe themselves, and be believed by others, to be part of communities characterized by English language practices. The rigid correspondence of English and the West is thus destabilized, at least in theory. Xu’s work is therefore invaluable in prioritizing an examination of the ideology and indexicality of English in the PRC and it forms part of an emerging body of literature on English and minorities in Chinese education policy scholarship which is starting to fill the gap we identified above (see e.g. Adamson and Feng 2009; Blachford and Jones 2011; Hu 2012; Yuan et al. 2015; Zhou 2001).

However, Xu’s proposition that English as a Western icon is potentially shaken among Chinese learners of English – who are still imagined as Mandarin-speaking

monolinguals – still largely ignores how multilingual minorities perceive English in China. There has, however, been a strong opening gambit in redressing this by sociolinguistics in Hong Kong and it provided us with a conceptual springboard. Lin and Luk (2005) theorized a “double domination” of Cantonese by Mandarin and English (in classrooms). This concept is useful to us in our concluding discussion of changing hierarchic language ideologies and the related placement of language practices within registers of signs.

The scant existing literature raises, for us, the following questions: if languages and identities are binary, where do people who speak more than two languages fit? Minority people in the PRC, as we have noted above, often now speak (at least) a minority language, Mandarin and English. So what is the (alleged) bilingual identity dilemma like from minority and multilingual perspectives? How do minority people take up this established dichotomy of English and Mandarin? These questions are as yet largely unanswered in the literature and so they animate this article. In answering, we will contend that English as well as its associated cultural symbols in concert with Mandarin are becoming part of an enregistered and representational double domination, or further marginalization, of minority language speakers on the Mainland.

2 Methods and scope

Before developing our joint answers to those questions, we here summarize the relevant approach of each of our studies as a foundation.

Grey's Zhuang study asks what language ideologies are produced in PRC language policy discourses, especially laws, and how social actors resist or reproduce these under conditions of socio-political change. Data was collected in multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in 2014–2015, with additional data collected in archives and online until 2019. In book form (Grey 2021a), the Zhuang study's primary focus is public language, although the study did also include data about Zhuang in tertiary education (Grey 2017) and in tourism contexts (Grey 2021b). The data was analyzed from linguistic landscape, lived landscape, and legal perspectives. The linguistic landscape analysis is the most relevant to this article. In that analysis, Grey (2021a) concludes that there are two main rationales shaping the display of languages additional to Mandarin: “up-scaling” (Blommaert 2007; Blommaert et al. 2014) with English or down-scaling with Zhuang (both part of constructing spatial identities), and using minority languages, especially Zhuang, to symbolize diversity within unity, typically manifesting in multilingual, Zhuang-inclusive signs that do not include English. Moreover, she argues that neither rationale overcomes the empirical dominance of Mandarin in these landscapes nor

its ideological normativity and naturalization. The study also found that the centrality of Mandarin was strongly reproduced through China's language governance framework, while marketization and globalization, including both processes' capitalization of English in China, are heightening the marginalization of Zhuang.

Baioud's Mongolian study asks what semiotic ideologies are produced in the performance of bilingual and bicultural weddings of Mongols in the PRC and how the indexical relation of Mongolian as traditional and Chinese/English as modern are reproduced and contested in the performance. The study draws on data collected during 2016 in Inner Mongolia where Baioud participated in weddings, collected wedding videos and interviewed a range of wedding participants including wedding ceremony speakers, wedding costume studios owners, photographers, wedding guests, and couples (Baioud 2018; Baioud 2021a, 2021b). Baioud's study finds that the performance of bilingual and bicultural weddings of Mongols expands and reproduces the orthodox representation of Mongolian culture as traditional while representing Chinese culture and the Sinicized Western culture as modern.

Both studies are rooted in social constructionist, Bourdieusian critical sociolinguistics. The aspect of that school of theory on which we center this combined analysis is Agha's theory of enregisterment, thereby offering a new perspective on Grey's study and extending Baioud's (2021a, 2021b) prior use of Agha's theory. Agha's theory builds upon contemporary sociolinguistic research on the social and ideological aspects of linguistic representation, which have been examined extensively (e.g. Androutsopoulos 2012; Bucholtz and Lopez 2011; Coupland 2007; Rampton 1995). These aspects are now conventionally considered as integral to indexical meaning-making; Blommaert (2007: 115) argues "sociolinguistic variations function as powerful sources of indexical meanings that connect discourses to contexts and induce categories, similarities and differences within frames, and thus suggest identities, tones, styles and genres that appear to belong or to deviate from expected types". As Ochs (1992: 338) states "part of the meaning of any utterance is its social history, its social presence, and its social future". These indices are socially constituted – or "enregistered" – into sets of co-constructive, affiliated semiotic resources, which Agha (2007: 187) terms "enregistered signs". These affiliated suites of signs mean similar things across a society or community (Thus each language itself, on a social constructionist view, can be explained not as a natural object but a suite of co-enregistered linguistic signs). Agha (2007: 188) theorizes that these registers are dynamic and socially-situated: "registers are historically changing systems that are shaped by processes linking groups to each other in social space".

Moreover, it is known that the indexical juxtaposition of languages often does not appear alone in virtuosic staged linguistic performances, but instead

representations of and in language occur together with other non-linguistic representations (such as colorful dress and traditional music with the performance of a “heritage” language). That is, language practices and other language-related semiotic resources such as representations of language, forms of writing, variations in the materiality of text etc. become differentiable within larger semiotic systems as components of socially recognized registers.

As may be clear to some readers from the preceding paragraph, in this article we wish to emphasize that Agha’s (2007) concept of enregisterment deals usefully not only with linguistic signs but also with non-linguistic semiotic accompaniments that, in our view, likewise “become endogenized to the register model, that is, become recognized as co-occurrence patterns that constitute enregistered styles” (Agha 2007: 187).

Further, Agha (2007: 189) predicts the “strategic stylization of one’s own speech and demeanour” in response to the conventionalization, through processes of social construction of these indexical registers. That is, the uptake of various signs can be heterogeneous styled and intentionally counter-normal, not always unthinking or conventional, whether for specific, localized identity construction and/or identity play, or in larger-scale attempts to change a register. We take up this aspect of Agha’s theory in our discussion (Section 3). Spurring our inquiry into this aspect of the theory, Song (2018) finds that performing bilingualism in Mandarin and English is a stylized resource to indicate affluent, globalized, youthful culture in China, and thus a commercially valuable semiotic resource as well. To us, this exemplifies a stylized response to the enregisterment of features affiliated with Mandarin *and* English into a shared modern, urban register in China.

In further inquiring into the shared enregisterment of Mandarin and English, our focus is on signs that are representations and embodied practices of culture, and their enregisterment along with linguistic signs into registers of East and West, Modernity and Tradition, Majority and Minority. This builds on each of our prior, separate analyses of images of globalization and westernization and their recurrence with, or patterned separation from, Mandarin and minority language use. For example, Baioud (2018) found that white wedding dresses have become concurrent with Chinese language wedding speech genres in the bilingual and bicultural weddings of Mongols. She thus argued that the registers that act as indices of the Chinese wedding genre are expanding. Another example is Grey’s (2021b) analysis of the standardized Mandarin and English bilingual signage of new high-speed rail infrastructure across Guangxi Zhuangzu Autonomous Region (Guangxi). This bilingualism indexes the linguistic landscapes of East China’s cities. Grey argues that this linguascaping is part of representing Guangxi as well-connected both physically and normatively to urban China while erasing Guangxi’s local linguistic diversity, with its indexical relationship to rurality,

traditions, and remoteness, for (touristic) commercial gain; she calls this cultural urbanization. Grey (2021a: 206–298) further analyses how registers of linguistic and non-linguistic signs indexing “Zhuangness” have changed.

In the remainder of this article, we examine the changing indexicality of English, Mandarin and minority languages, and their place (or displacement) in changing registers of “western” and “eastern” signs.

3 English, Mandarin, minority languages, and the changing registers of the “West”

Here, we discuss the key similarities and differences between our two studies. Instead of merely summarizing various similarities between our studies, we have chosen to bring the reader further into our analysis by honing in on the similar co-enregisterment of English and Mandarin in a “modernity” register. Drawing from our individual studies, we offer one detailed, illustrative case each. Namely, the shift from Zhuang to English as the preferred second language and an up-scaling resource in Guangxi’s public linguistic landscapes, in Section 3.1, and one bilingual bicultural wedding in an Inner Mongolian township, in Section 3.2. A similarity in both studies was the co-enregisterment of signs constructed as Western within Euro-American and global discourses along with signs of Han-Chinese culture in a “modernity” register. This included both linguistic and other semiotic signs.

3.1 A case study of public linguistic landscapes in Guangxi

This case study abridges the longer landscape study in Part Three of Grey (2021a). To first summarize key findings about these landscapes, monolingual Mandarin signage was the most prevalent, across all Grey’s urban, cultural and campus sites in Guangxi and in neighboring Yunnan Province, and across authors and genres of landscape text. Moreover, monolingual texts in Zhuang or English (or any other language) were negligible. Zhuang was not only rare monolingually but even in bilingual signage; the more frequent bilingual combination was Mandarin and English. What is particularly interesting in terms of changing registers is that it appears that English is being added to more signage, and more genres of signage, and even replacing Zhuang as the non-Mandarin public language of choice in Guangxi.

This is revealed, for instance, in Mandarin-English texts being particularly prevalent in commercially-oriented, new, digital, and temporary signage. Non-commercial signs which included English alongside Mandarin were likewise new, digital, or temporary in their materiality. This signage was usually for public order and about current, internationally-relevant practices or events, for example, the permanent “unrecycling” and “battery” labels on public bins in Guangxi’s capital city, Nanning, to direct recycling practices (Figure 1).

Contrasting to the patterns of Mandarin-English public texts, Mandarin-Zhuang bilingual texts were generally not commercially-oriented. They were mainly government-authored, and typically in the material form of simple, fixed street-names or public institution names. The street-name panels are about a decade old, the institution names often much older (see further Grey 2021a). The most common bilingual Mandarin-Zhuang public texts were street-name signs in Nanning. By 2014, standard-issue Mandarin-Zhuang street-name signage had been widely installed, with a toponym in Romanized Zhuang on the top line above a Mandarin toponym written in simplified characters and then in Pinyin. In a separately colored section at the bottom of this signage, Mandarin characters provided cardinal directions alongside deictic arrows, sometimes also with



Figure 1: Bins; Nanning: Mandarin/English.

adjacent streets' only names in Mandarin. It was only within genres of wayfaring/ place-naming signage that Zhuang was regularly included in some of the landscapes Grey studied in Guangxi (and not in others, e.g., on university campuses). Further, in all public signage using Zhuang, Zhuang took the written Romanized form officially sanctioned by the government.

Public signage featuring more than two languages was uncommon in Guangxi but when it occurred, it was typically government-authored signage naming public institutions in Mandarin, Zhuang, and English, while no signage combined Mandarin, Zhuang, and a foreign language other than English. Within the limited set of trilingual signage, government-authored signage naming public institutions in Mandarin, Zhuang, and English was the more common combination. A typical trilingual place-naming sign is shown in Figure 2, which shows the main entrance of Guangxi University for Nationalities (GUN) on a major public road. Figure 2 also



Figure 2: Main entrance, Guangxi University for Nationalities; Nanning; gateway sign: Zhuang/Mandarin/English. Bank sign: Mandarin/English.

shows that this gateway stands next to a Bank of China branch with a Mandarin-English bilingual commercial sign in which Zhuang is absent, as was also typical.

The bilingual Mandarin-English texts and the multilingual texts which included not only Zhuang but also English imply an international and/or internationally-aspiring readership. English up-scales the places these texts name or are emplaced within, drawing on its semiotic resourcefulness as an enregistered sign of the international/Western world. Thus, signage such as the Mandarin-Zhuang-English GUN gateway (Figure 2) can simultaneously up-scale with English and localize with Zhuang. That most other signs which included English did not also include Zhuang suggests that up-scaling is more important and/or more profitable than localizing.

Grey found this up-scaling use of English particularly within university campuses; this is not surprising, given that the internationalization of higher education is a global phenomenon. However, the relative absence of Zhuang from campuses – even the minority-specialist campuses where Zhuang language is taught – is more surprising. Moreover, the signs that did include Zhuang in those campuses' landscapes tended to be relatively old and affixed only on buildings where Zhuang language was studied. That is to say, Zhuang is not integral to the branding or place-making of even minority-specialist universities in South China, but English is now becoming integral even there. Finally, both the urban and campus landscapes in Grey's study reveal and reproduce the integral nature of Mandarin enregistering urbanity, civic order, commerce, and education.

Thus, the public linguistic landscapes of Guangxi represent Zhuang language as part of a register of signs of tradition and heritage, and Mandarin language as part of contemporary, urban practices and culture. However, English is also made highly relevant to, and represented as, modern, urban cultural practice in these landscapes. This is an illustration of (public, written) Mandarin and English being displayed as indices that are socially constituted as affiliated together; both are enregistered signs symbolizing and emplacing modernity and urbanity. Moreover, we contend that this meaning, for both indices, is made in part through a distinction from tradition, rurality and minority language.

And return to Agha's prediction of the counter-cultural semiotic affordance provided by the conventionalization of an enregistered sign, in the Zhuang case study we can also see some agentive stylization. That is, individuals self-consciously make new usage of the enregistered semiotic resources, including publicly displayed Zhuang language. For example, Grey (2021a) points out the embodiment of an authoritative Zhuang identity which makes meaning from both public displays of Romanized Zhuang on street-name signage and from individuals' own (very rare) literacy in correcting that signage. This is a challenge to the state's construction of Romanized Zhuang as a sign of the Zhuang identity. A

different phenomenon found by Grey, but likewise an illustration of stylized usage of registers, is the growing existence of people who identify as Zhuang and who are accepted by others as Zhuang but who cannot or chose not to speak Zhuang. Participants commented on this change itself and on the growing acceptance of such people as Zhuang. These people agentively de-register spoken Zhuang language from what we might call the Zhuang cultural register but continue to employ other signs from that register, such as participation in Zhuang cultural activities, listening to Zhuang music, and coming from families and neighborhoods where other people spoke/speak Zhuang (Grey [2021a] looks further into the addition, over time, of specific activities and visual tropes to the Zhuang cultural register.). For our purposes in this article, it is especially important that these people themselves, and many of their friends and communities, accept them as performing Zhuang identity in the medium of Mandarin, whether the national Putonghua or the local topolect, Nanning *Baihua*. However, as we have explained in Section 1, this sort of indexicality of Mandarin is not yet represented or accepted in many powerful discourses; performing a Zhuang identity in Mandarin challenges the one ethnicity-one language ideology and the belief that minority culture is inherently pre-modern.

3.2 A case study of a bilingual bicultural hybrid Mongolian wedding

The “traditional” enregisterment of Zhuang is similar with regard to Mongolian language. Overall, Baioud finds that bilingual and bicultural weddings of Mongols reproduce but also expand the orthodox representation of Mongolian culture as traditional while representing Chinese culture and (Sinicized) Western culture as modern; Western and Han-Chinese cultural symbols fit hand in glove with each other as signs of modernity and are juxtaposed with Mongolian ritual symbols and practices in these cultural performances (the weddings). One of these weddings is discussed here as an illustrative case.

As a prelude to this case study, it is helpful to briefly explain three types of Mongolian weddings that emerged from Baioud’s research in Inner Mongolia. These are Mongolian-themed weddings, hybrid weddings, and Chinese-dominant weddings, based on her analysis of the choices of genres, languages, and symbols. However, such classification by no means captures the nuanced variation of the weddings of Mongols in reality; its function is heuristic. Baioud categorizes the bilingual bicultural wedding that forms this case study as a hybrid wedding, and this type is relatively common in urban Inner Mongolia.

This wedding took place at Lubei town, in the seat of Jarud Banner (*zhalute qi*) in eastern Inner Mongolia (for more information on Mongolian administrative terms see Jagchid and Hyer 1979). This is a township where an intense contact between Mongols and Han-Chinese has taken place since the early 20th century (Burensain 2017; Lattimore 1940). The bride, Gerile, is a public servant and the groom, Batu, is a businessman, and both are bilingual urban Mongols. After the conclusion of private rituals at home, the wedding ceremony and reception shifted to a hotel, where a publicly-staged wedding performance took place on an elevated T-shaped stage. The stage was decorated with flowers, lights, and signs in English reading “weddings”. This analysis focuses on the bilingual wedding performance on the stage and other accompanying non-linguistic signs.

There were two wedding ceremony speakers: Ying, a Chinese woman who worked at a television station as a broadcaster and speaks Mandarin only; and Sümbür, a bilingual Mongolian man who used to work at Mongolian radio programs and now worked at a Mongolian primary school in town.

After the arrival of all the guests, who included monolingual elderly Mongols, bilingual Mongols and monolingual Mandarin speakers, a DJ equipped with a Mac-Pro and Beats earphones kicked off the ceremony on the stage. The DJ’s performance was accentuated further by a simultaneous light show (the prelude). The ceremony proper commenced with Sümbür delivering a typical Mongolian welcome speech for guests and Ying delivering a Mandarin commentary on love and marriage (ceremony preliminaries): see the Extract (1) for an example. The second part shifted the focus to the couple (the couple-specific commentary). In this part, the groom was first invited to the stage by Ying. After a short Mandarin speech on love backgrounded by a soft melody, the groom was asked to walk from one end of the runway to the other, kneel down before the bride (at this moment, Bon Jovi’s song *It’s My Life* invaded the scene) and give her a bunch of flowers. The effect was to resemble a Western marriage proposal, and Ying was responsible for this segment. After the marriage proposal the couple walked together to the main stage, then Sümbür delivered praises of the couple and an introduction about the couple in Mongolian. This speech genre of praise is a traditional Mongolian oral literature called *magtaal* ‘praise’ (see further Baioud 2021a, 2021b).

Throughout this ceremony, the choice of genre closely mapped with the choice of language. Enregistered signs of Mongolian wedding rituals were unanimously carried out via the medium of Mongolian by Sümbür. By contrast, the enregistered signs of non-Mongolian cultures, be it originally associated with the Western or Chinese cultures, were expressed through Mandarin by Ying. Below, we present speech data to further exemplify the linguistic and generic patterns and how they are endowed with varying meanings. Extract (1) is the opening speech from the segment of ceremony preliminaries. Sümbür was in his usual white Mongolian

costume with matching white hat, yellow sash, and Mongolian boots, which Baioud saw him wear at other weddings, and he was holding a blue *hadag* in his right hand. A *hadag* is an oblong piece of silk used on various ceremonial occasions by the Mongols and Tibetans. It is the indispensable accompaniment to any gift or offering (Hangin 1988). Ying was wearing a long, pink ball gown adorned with lace, with heels (see Figure 3).

Extract (1) Bilingual opening speech (Baioud's translation)

Sümbür:

1. *Uuljsan bühen deen mend-iin chengher hadag-aan ürgej, ucharsan bühen deen menghe-iin saihan yörööl-een debshüülen.* 1. 'On every encounter, we hold the blue *hadag* of peace. On every meeting, we send the blessing of eternal auspices.'
2. *Haalga üüd-een tos-oor miliyasan, horim-iin nijger nair-iin jochin hoimor-t gereltüülen saatesan erhim hündet jochin ta bühen deen ene chag-iin mend-iig hürgeyee!* 2. 'I am sending forth the peace of this moment to my respected guests who by their presence brighten the *hoimor* ("the honorific zone") and honor the great *nair* ("banquet and feast") of this wedding ceremony!'
3. *Daayar-aan beye amor, tumen ülji, түбшин hiimor-tai amarhan saihan ebeljij bainuu?* 3. 'Are you all well, peaceful and full of *hiimor* ("wind horse"?) Are you wintering well, and enjoying infinite peace and blessings?'

Ying:

4. 朋友们，婚姻是幸福的开始，是一次爱情的升华，同时也注定了两个人将开始发生蜕变，将会懂得如何经营一个幸福的家庭。 4. 'Dear friends, marriage is the starting point of happiness, it is the sublimation of love; and it also means a transformation for two persons. From now on, they will learn how to build and manage a happy family.'
5. 作为男人就是该像右手一样坚实而有力，作为女人就应该像左手一样温柔而体贴。 5. 'As a man, he should be as strong and steadfast as the right hand; as a woman, she should be as gentle and considerate as the left hand.'

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| <p>6. 只有将左手与右手紧紧握在一起的时候才可以迸发出最伟大的爱情力量。</p> <p>7. xx先生xx女士新婚庆典正式进入倒计时，朋友们当我数到三时掌声响起! (1, 2, 3)</p> | <p>6. ‘Only if the right and left hand hold each other firmly can they bring forth the greatest love.’</p> <p>7. ‘Mr. xx and Miss xx’s wedding ceremony has entered the final count down. Please applaud when I count to three! (1, 2, 3)’</p> |
|---|--|

The Mongolian part of this opening speech is characterized by culturally and traditionally salient Mongolian greetings through its inclusion of words such as *hadag* ‘ceremonial scarf’, *hiimor* ‘wind horse’, or *hoimor*, the place of honor in the Mongolian *ger* ‘yurt’. Hangin (1988) explains *hiimor* as a mythic power which protects and makes one successful. The parallel structure of the text hews closely to the pattern of a Mongolian speech genre and creates a socially recognizable context defined by a series of enregistered styles.

However, the Mandarin speech that follows the Mongolian speech operates within an entirely different generic frame: it extols romance and love by comparing the husband and wife as the right hand and left hand of a person (lines 5–6). By doing so, Ying sets a ceremonial scene filled with romance and love. Her way of opening the ceremony bears a lot of similarities with celebrations and shows played on Chinese television. Against a soft romantic melody, she expounds on love and marriage, then the lights are dimmed when she asks the audience to count down to three with her. At the count of three, the hall



Figure 3: The Mongolian and Chinese ceremony speakers.

suddenly lights up. Simultaneously, the melodic music is replaced by sharp and happy music. Overall, the scene created by the Mandarin segment is far removed from the traditional ritualistic tone of the Mongolian segment and resembles an award announcement on television. Furthermore, the stage decorations highlight the romance and modernity of the ceremony with their flowers, DJ performance, and two English “weddings” signs shining on angelic wing-shaped plasters.

To further illustrate how the fusion of Mandarin with Western wedding practices works in opposition to Mongolian ones we consider one sub-segment from the couple interaction segment. This is marriage vows delivered in Mandarin by Ying after Sümbür finished a speech that extolled the bride’s mother’s love and sacrifice and located it within the generic frame of Mongolian ritual speech. Ying then takes on her role and starts to move on to marriage vows, as shown in Extract (2).

Extract (2) Chinese marriage vows (Baioud’s translation)

Ying:

那么现在有请二位新人面对面站好，双手相牵，深情的望彼此的眼睛，回答主持人的婚礼誓言。帅气的新郎，你是否愿意娶你对面的美丽的新娘为妻，在未来的生活中无论贫穷还是富裕，无论健康疾病，无论顺境或逆境，你都愿意与她不离不弃，相伴一生，你愿意吗？

‘Now please the newly-weds while holding hands, and looking into each other’s eyes lovingly, respond to marriage vows. The handsome groom, will you marry this beautiful bride standing in front of you as your wife? Will you be with her and love her all your life for better for worse, for richer and poorer, in sickness and in health?’

Batu (groom):

我愿意！

‘I will.’

Ying:

那么美丽的新娘，你是否同样愿意...

‘The beautiful bride, will you also’

A Sinicized replica of a Western Christian wedding ceremony is performed in this second extract by Ying, a young Chinese woman in pink dress embodying romance and love instead of priestly holiness. Such integration of Western Christian marriage vows into the weddings of modern secular Chinese couples is ubiquitous in China. The insertion of marriage vows at this hybrid wedding has two implications.

First, the flavor of modernity as signaled by an open and public declaration of love brought to Mongols through the medium of Mandarin speech. After being recontextualized by Chinese at numerous other weddings, to what extent this conventional speech formulas still carries or invokes its original Western source is doubtful. In other words, the marriage vows, despite their Western source, are increasingly associated with conventional enregistered signs of modern Western-inspired Chinese weddings. Second, the juxtaposition of Mandarin marriage vows with salient traditional Mongolian speech genres maintains the generic boundary, and thus traditionalizes the Mongolian speech genres and modernizes the Chinese speeches.

The case study of the bilingual bicultural wedding illustrates the genre hybrid of Mongolian performance and Chinese performance with each deriving their authority from different sources. The Mongolian opening speech by a Mongolian man dressed in Mongolian outfits are interdiscursively related to Mongolian wedding tradition and from there it borrows its authority. The Mandarin speech on couple's love and marriage vows are colored by modernity, which is further enhanced by other Western imports, such as English songs, white bridal gown, English decorative word *weddings*, and Ying's ball gown. It is the detachment of Mongolian genres from Chinese genres that creates this specific and popular type of parallel bilingual and bicultural wedding through which young Mongol couples nod to tradition and simultaneously embrace modernity.

However, in such processes, Mongolian culture and language are essentialized further while Chinese language and culture are endowed with mobility and power to reach out to and represent modernity. Also, it is Mandarin that offers a safe and appropriate channel to voice love and romance in public – an action which has been frowned upon in traditional societies of eastern Inner Mongolia (Pao 1964). In short, the allocation of the proposal and marriage vows (and other speech practices at this wedding relating to Western-inspired rituals such as popping open a bottle of Champagne) to the realm of Mandarin speech shows the enlarging register of signs associated with Mandarin, modernity and the West. By contrast, the stereotypical representation of Mongolian ritual speech and ritual objects (milk, *hadag*, etc.) as key defining characteristics of public Mongolian culture is relatively static.

Nevertheless, from the data we can see that there is yet room in such weddings to agentively re-deploy these enregistered signs, as Agha's theory predicts. As Baranovitch (2003: 83) notes “galloping horses, endless grassland, a pastoral, nomadic way of life, and the historical figures of Chinggis Khan and his descendants have all been part and parcel of public Mongolian identity in China for at least a century”. However, this continuity should not mislead us to think that minorities have befallen the Orientalizing gaze. Rather, the clear demarcation of

Chinese genres from Mongolian genres throughout the wedding and their non-subordinative relation in carrying out culturally differentiated and enregistered ritual acts helps Mongols to claim a unique Mongolian identity. More importantly, such deliberate segregation of languages and genres demonstrates the Mongols' agentive practice to straddle and organize the actual rather fuzzy and hybrid bilingual and bicultural society and identity into a clear order – an order that authenticates and purifies their cultures and allows them to reach out to the trappings of modernity symbolized by the Sinicized West, albeit through the medium of Mandarin (For a problematization of this purification, see Baioud and Khuunuud.) Such hybridity and agency characterize what Bhabha termed “third space” in post-colonial societies. In other words, it is from within this third space, the interface of Self and Other, the meeting point of tradition and modernity that the colonized and subalterns derive their agency and challenge the structural domination (Bhabha 2004). Undoubtedly, in this process of organizing and reshuffling hybrid signs, Mongolian wedding performers enlarge and redefine what is enregistered as the East.

Recapping, our comparison of key similarities shows that Mandarin coupled with English and other symbolic practices invoking Western culture(s) and their collective enregisterment of modernity are distinctly and meaningfully differentiated from the group of registers that index minority identities and traditions, such as the minority languages Zhuang and Mongolian, and traditional minority cultural practices such as Mongolian ritual acts.

And what about any key differences between the studies? The two differences which we have found most prominent are in the commercialization of minority languages and in the intersecting constructions of gender and minority identities. These further demonstrate the dynamic construction of enregistered signs. We found that both Zhuang and Mongolian languages were subordinated and marginalized, but nevertheless Mongolian has gained more visibility than Zhuang due to its commodification and due to the active participation of the minority Mongols in the representation of Mongolian culture in public space. Baioud (2018) found that the Mongolian language is in profitable use in commercial activities, in part because it remains a marked language that carries hints of exoticization and folklorization, in particular for outsiders, e.g. the Mandarin-speaking Chinese wedding guests, and in part because it is valued as a linguistic commodity by Mongols themselves. Grey's (2017, 2021a) study found that Zhuang really has not had this sort of commodification; rather, as she argues in Grey (2021b), the absence of Zhuang language is what the market values as a place-making resource, especially in tourism. Moreover, as Grey (2021a) argues, public representations of Zhuang people and culture in Guangxi are, overall, devoid of representations of “doing Zhuang language”; Zhuang language is not represented as a still-existing

part of Zhuang culture; most public representations, rather, participate in excluding Zhuang language, whether formally written or as a spoken vernacular, from enregistered signs of Zhuang culture. Unlike the limited enregisterment of Mongolian language in modern, urban, and commercial registers, Zhuang language is not visible in equivalent registers.

In regards to the commodification of English, our studies also reveal differences. In the Zhuang context, English up-scales the local and its usage in public texts is up-to-date. It is part of the symbolic repertoire of development, and this means that the agents who use English, particularly in public and performative ways, are oftentimes commercial agents (and the government, too). In the Mongolian context, by contrast, English is part of a symbolic repertoire of romance and a “language of love”, which means the agents who use English, particularly in public and performative ways, are the minority Mongols themselves. Yet, in the Mongolian context, the symbolic use of English is mostly within Mandarin-medium communications by Mongols, constructing English signs of the West as one integral part of Chinese-led modernization.

Furthermore, in Baioud’s study Mongolian tradition is embodied by Mongolian men whereas modernity and Mandarin are embodied by Han-Chinese women, in the wedding MC roles at least. This is illustrated in the data included above. By contrast, in Grey’s study, it is the women who are represented as embodying Zhuang traditional culture (see further Grey 2021a: Ch. 7). Our argument is that signs of gender are enregistered inversely in the two contexts; a modernity/tradition ideological distinction recursively maps onto language distinctions similarly across both contexts and in both contexts also maps onto a meaningful social male/female distinction, but not in corresponding mappings across contexts.

A longstanding, asymmetrical Chinese gendered imagination of southern and northern frontier people has been noted by several scholars. Amongst others, Bulag (2002) has illustrated the foundations of a long history of masculinization of northern nomads and the self-feminization and male anxiety experienced by Han-Chinese elites. Qi (2011) found that the feminization and eroticization of southern “barbarians” in Ming and Qing dynasty travel writings was prevalent. These asymmetrical gendered imaginings of northern and southern others continue to operate in today’s Chinese public discourses about and representations of minorities. The solid invocations of Mongol power, imperial heritage, strength, and masculinity are clearly present in diverse discourses, e.g. the fiddle performance “Ten Thousand Horses” (D’Evelyn 2014; see also Bulag 2002), while we have observed the feminized spectacle being reproduced in campaigns promoting other/all Guangxi minorities (e.g., the 2018 China Global Television Network news report “High-speed trains drive Guangxi’s development”). Likewise, Turner (2010)

notes the preponderance of women (in traditionally-inspired minority costumes) in tourism texts advertising Guangxi.

There could be much said about gender and cultural performance in China, but the point we limit ourselves to here is that our studies reveal a difference in the ideological mapping of gender onto the ideological categories under discussion. The key difference is in the ideological organization of signs of male or female into the registers of Minority and Traditional.

4 Conclusion

We discussed two case studies – of Zhuang’s inclusion and absence in public linguistic landscapes in Guangxi, and of multilingualism in a hybrid wedding in urban Inner Mongolia – to explore the similar co-enregisterment in both studies of signs constructed as Western along with signs of Han-Chinese culture, but excluding minority languages and other signs of minority cultures, in what we called a modernity register (following Agha 2007).

Moreover, we argue that this is a recursive ideological process, through language ideologies and practices, of the displacement of subaltern status. That is, we have illustrated and discussed the significance of a distinction between Mandarin and English, on one hand, and minority languages on the other, in dynamic internal Orientalism, drawing on our two concurrent but separate studies in the southern and northern PRC and with particular reference to data on language display and performance. We noted earlier that Schein (2000) identified such internal Orientalism as a social phenomenon operating through other processes in contemporary China, in her studies with other minorities. The differences which we found in the enregisterment of Zhuang and Mongolian minority languages as signs further elucidated this internal Orientalism as a form of global East-West language ideologies playing out on local scales. The most thought-provoking differences were the greater commodification of Mongolian compared to Zhuang, and the co-enregisterment of Mongolian language and tradition with signs of masculinity whereas signs of Zhuang language and tradition are enregistered with signs of femininity.

We also noted that, as predicted in enregisterment theory, there is some evidence of agentive and stylized uptake of these signs to meaningfully contravene their conventionalized meanings. This was clearest in the Mongolian study; some (aspects of) performances attempted to combine indices of modernity and Mongolian identity, while others sought to maintain their semiotic opposition but without a hierarchical ordering between them. Overall, however, we consider that the dominant discourses found in performance, in the built environment, in media

etc. construct a double domination (or top-heavy hierarchy of languages, to put it another way) by two linguistic indices of East Chinese modernity – English and Mandarin – over minority languages and the traditional minority ethno-cultural identities they index. We found this in north and south China, however, Baioud's study found it was contested more on a local scale than was apparent in Grey's study.

This article into the in-progress enregisterment of English as an Eastern sign in the PRC, framed through theories of language ideology and enregistered signs, suggests that the changing social contexts will further propel the ideological re-mapping of the global, hierarchic East-West binary away from a correspondence to the Mandarin-English divide, towards a divide between minority languages and the mobile, profitable, dominant duo of Mandarin and English. That is, within the PRC, the register of signs or indices of the “East” is coming to include Mandarin and English practices, and also includes signs of urbanization and modernization. There is a co-constructed binary, oppositional or “other” register and it, too, is changing. One of its changes is the emergent endogenization of Western China into a register of signs of minority language practices and non-urban, non-modern cultural practices and representations. Zhuang and Mongolian languages and cultures are, in our view, co-opted into this broadly Orientalizing register of the “Other” within China. However, we note that Baioud's study has suggested Mongolian may fare better than Zhuang in this changing context because it is also endogenized into some local registers of prestigious, urban, contemporary, and commercialized practices, namely weddings. Moreover, as revealed in our comparison of differences between the two studies, there would be value in further investigation of gender intersecting with ideologies of English and with East-West ideologies in contemporary China.

Our article aims to show how the shifting linguistic and cultural orders in minority contexts challenge a dominant dichotomization of the East and the West. Together, we demonstrate that the assumption of English as the epitome of the West and of Mandarin as that of the East is challenged, or more accurately, it is ideologically reorganized. The challenger is an imagined geography of East China which adds English to the dominant signs of Han-Chinese-ness which are invested with national and global symbolic power. This is, further, the chief implication of this article for researchers of this and other multilingual Asian environments: a challenge to assumptions that East-West binary language ideologies are reproduced as Foreign-Local ideologies. We have denaturalized the assumed identity conflict between Mandarin and English, and denaturalized the essentialization (by academics as well as others) of English as inherently *not Chinese*, as well as (albeit to a lesser extent) Mandarin as inherently non-Minority. In reorienting towards a minority perspective on the far-too-oft-made assumption of a Chinese-English

identity dilemma, we made the point that both dominant languages have undergone changes in the eyes of minorities as well as of the majority. Images of modernization and the global West are filtered and appropriated through the medium of Chinese in minority performances in our data. This article thus paves the way for more contemporary studies of recursive Orientalism under conditions of Chinese nation-building/colonialism both within, and potentially beyond, its borders.

Finally, our two studies suggest that this double domination of minority languages is reorganizing the language practices and other semiotic resources associated with and defining the Han-Chinese-ness, presenting an intriguing subject for future research. Gladney (1994: 49) argues that “the objectified portrayal of minorities as exoticized, and even eroticized, is essential to the construction of the Han-Chinese majority, the very formulation of the Chinese ‘nation’ itself”. The converse is also important, in our view: the portrayal and imagination of the Han-Chinese majority as affiliated with English by minorities is essential to their construction of national and minority identities. What “Chinese-ness” is, is changing as the semiotic resources associated with the global, Anglophone West flood into China’s minority regions and their linguascapes and culturescapes.

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