

The Ethnicity of Anthropology in China

Discursive Diversity and Linguistic Relativity

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Abstract ■ Chinese anthropologists have been attempting to locate anthropology in China, debating the legitimacy of its *bentu hua*, or 'nativization'. However, a second careful look will take us to a more complicated landscape. While China, as one of the 'mis-imagined' homogeneous world-level communities has to face the West, its minority groups, whether 'imagined or not', have to confront both the Han world and the West. In connection to the hegemony of a market economy, which sidelined the minorities, the 'ethnicity' of anthropologists reflects their respective upbringing or 'habitus'. A sub-version of Sapir-Whorfian linguistic relativity bites here: anthropologists who master different languages tend to merge into linguistically demarcated separate interest groups. Looking at the underlying implications will lead our analysis metaphorically to a broader view of the extant dilemma global social sciences and humanities have been trapped in.

Keywords ■ discursive diversity ■ ethnicity of anthropology ■ linguistic relativity

Hierarchical orders of particularism

Universalism and particularism are two extreme edges of a global frame of reference in scholarship. This statement is oversimplified to cover the 'order of things' nicely. In order to have a more authentic picture, we need some theoretical complication and as much oppositional contrast as interactionism. Time (history) creates power relations that pervade the knowledge in the head of an armchair professor. Power contrasts shift within the spectrum of opposition and grades of distinction while the shift itself is not one dimensional. What I mean here is that contrast does not always take place between East and West, South and North. Each has its own headache: the contrasts are possibly sharper within a particular social space than beyond.

A united front can redraw a boundary and turn an internecine fight into a 'class' war. Many national minorities in the state of China went

through roughly the same Democratic Reform after 1947 (the year in which the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, the first of the five Chinese autonomous regions, was founded). Communism won the hearts of millions of minorities who were willing to jump into socialism by acceptance of rapid social, cultural and economic transformation, which coincided with the Nationality Identification Project,¹ under the leadership of the Communist Party of China. Many anthropologists and ethnologists who converted themselves into Marxists through re-education participated in this project. In the following years, the Identification Project² took priority in the research of Chinese anthropologists and ethnologists. Soviet style '*etnografiia*' (ethnology)³ became the mainstay by way of a paradigm. It is fair to say that ethnology at that time was a top-down political agenda rather than a horizontal academic pursuit.⁴ The main task then was to 'save the underdeveloped' (*qiangjiu luohou*),⁵ help promote social transformation and democratic reform in minority areas, ensure equal political participation in state affairs, and enrich and improve Marxist social history of human development through the use of data on the primitive, slave and feudal-serf societal forms of the Chinese minorities (Nationality Committee of the National People's Congress, 1956).

Studies of the majority Han Chinese and minority studies within the 'bourgeois' discipline of Western anthropology and sociology had to give way to minority studies of Soviet ethnology, and later, 'nationality studies'. The latter were far more urgent for reshaping the configuration of a new Chinese nation-state, and more effective for reversing the nationalist (Kuomintang) government's reactionary ethnic policies and Western anti-Marxist 'pseudo' scholarship in the relevant field.⁶ There was, from the start, a movement to nativize social sciences in China, and the movement continues today. At first it was to render the social sciences proletarian. More recently and more nationalistically it has actually been called 'nativization' (*bentu hua*). Actually, there have been double standards in terms of social evolution, at least on the part of most Han officials and many Han intellectuals. 'Nativization' of anthropology means to study all 'ethnic groups' equally in China, since there are no racial differences within this country.⁷ That means that Chinese ethnology should study indiscriminately all nationalities within the territory. However, it was not that simple because study meant hierarchization of different sociocultural communities in China by order of social evolution underscored by Marxist evolutionary theory, be it in a Soviet or a Chinese version. Inside China, the Han should have equal status as a research subject but they do not. The distinction between sociology and ethnology is often used to hierarchize majority separation from minorities. Westerners themselves study the Han along with other minority groups in this country as anthropological subjects because they all represent Otherness to them.⁸ It is no accident that Marxist evolutionary theory and the academic disciplines of anthropology and sociology come from the West and share important theoretical origins.

Therefore, based on the above discourse, there have been different versions of 'nativization' of anthropology in China. One is 'Sinicization' for Han studies, a blending of sociology and anthropology, a meeting point between East and West.⁹ The other is ethnologization of minority studies. Having said that, we have to concede that such a version of 'Sinicization', that is, the blending of anthropology with sociology, has not been recognized by most 'true' sociologists in China. They insist on being sociologists, as did the doyen of sociology Fei Xiaotong until, in the 1990s, he agreed again to the designation 'anthropology' so long as it was closely linked to 'sociology'.

Many colleagues, in China and outside, tell me of their impression that Chinese anthropologists do too much on Other (minority *minzu*) and too little on the Han. Yes, I would say that too much has been done on 'minorities' outside social and cultural anthropology as a discipline and too little has been accomplished in order to slot Chinese anthropology into its international niche.¹⁰ We tend to confuse paradigm with agenda. As far as paradigm is concerned, there have been more Western-style and more influential anthropological studies of the Han than of minority nationals.

Sociocultural anthropology returned after China started to reform and academic research in the strict senses became possible. This is a time when the official configuration of Chinese nationalities (*minzu*) and the locals' own versions of linguistic-cultural taxonomy can coexist, as long as there are no serious political consequences or implications. While Western anthropology had gone through a long development before it plunged into a debate on 'postmodernist' criticism, the discipline in China has yet to go through such a rite of passage. Foundations are weak both in fieldwork and theoretically. With wave after wave of 'culture craze', Western anthropological theories came though translations and academic exchanges into the unprepared embrace of the then eager-learning Chinese sociocultural anthropologists. The reflexive 'writing culture', reinforced by Said-ian onslaughts upon orientalism, has deepened 'nativization' theorization, writing and practice in the recovering discipline, largely based on fieldwork conducted in researchers' own linguistic communities.¹¹ The value of traditional cultures increased overnight and anthropology is best poised to represent and interpret them. To some degree the 'culture craze' found in anthropology a useful tool for digging up old roots. Partly due to linguistic and cultural readiness, more anthropologists in China tend to study their own groups, which used to be studied by Western anthropologists as Other. Cultural roots embrace ethnic feelings easily, and re-orient class boundaries towards ethnic boundaries. Anthropologists and ethnologists in China with differing ethnic origins center on their own linguistic communities in a bounded imaginable space. Minority scholars, benefiting from their Han mentors and teachers, colleagues and classmates, have found a foot-hold in their own subjectivity and cultural sensitivity. They have gathered to form new breeds of local cultural promoters. However, they seem also to have

withdrawn from the main anthropological arena in China, relying on their linguistic capital, playing their own 'lineage' games.¹² It is a time in China when cultural sensitivity creates tension, and political suspicion structures the ethnicity of anthropology.

Some Mongolian anthropologists have told me that they tend to avoid their Han colleagues because they are 'chauvinistic'.¹³ It is true that they seldom talk to their Han counterparts. Tibetan and Yi anthropologists do not often show up at major anthropological events in China. We do not hear about as many minority case studies as Han. No doubt, the *Danwei* system (very roughly, [Work] Unit System),¹⁴ together with the registration system, has always been persuasively important for social control in China. Even now, the interplay of academic politics in China is enacted and re-enacted more often between *Danwei* than individuals, whatever their social and cultural backgrounds. But that is not all. Besides *Danwei* boundaries, we also have ethnic boundaries, though I reluctantly use the word 'ethnic' and only use it very loosely and grudgingly to refer to linguistic and cultural upbringing.

Scholars in China talk about 'nativization' in similar terms, but differing overtones. Han colleagues talk 'nativization' meaning China versus the West; Mongolian scholars advocate 'nativization' hinting at Mongol versus Han and the West. And so do Yi, Tibetan, Miao scholars, and many others. Within the Mongolian scholarly community, 'nativization' can mean mother-tongue or even dialect-based scholarship. The checklist has to stop here, though further fragmentation is still possible. Particularism in China, as in the rest of the world, therefore, is hierarchically ordered. It is not that one whole camp versus the other is universalistic. Each higher order can use 'universalism' against the 'particularism' of the lower order(s), and it can also use 'particularism' against still higher orders. Each order lives a dialectical scholarly life, like fire and water, birth and death. Ethnicity can be a rallying cry for particularistic self-legitimization. It is not only a rallying cry but also an 'embodiment'.¹⁵ Ethnically distinctive linguistic practice, inherited from ancestors, together with other kinds of enactment (rituals, shamanistic formulas, consumption, etc.), collapse the duality of cultural mind and social body. Once, a professor of social anthropology at Cambridge asked me whether the Mongols could express their identity in Chinese, by which she hinted at the losing situation of the Mongolian language in China. However, it is not a question of the language in its physical sense (acoustics, orthography, etc.); it is rather a deeply felt somatic symbolism. Linguistic imagination is often more important than the language itself. Many younger Mongolians have lost their mother-tongue but they still regard themselves as members of the Mongolian community. They 'borrow' images and linguistic practice from their kith and kin who can still use Mongolian, and build them into their embodied ethnicity. As is commonly seen, Mongolian urbanites, including practitioners of anthropology

and folklore, are more ethnically identified than their rural folks, disregarding the fact that they have lost almost all of Stalin's 'four commons'.¹⁶ It seems that there is a wealth of cultural 'hybridity' in them: they are also competent in Chinese, dressed in Western-style attire, and bargaining on the market.¹⁷

However, 'hybridity' is a fussy term, the undefined use of which has the danger of weakening the edge of such conceptions as 'hierarchy' and 'power' and obfuscating academic ethnicity. 'Hierarchy' provides us with useful food for thought in the anthropological literature.¹⁸ Hierarchy means time and power relations, not $1 + 1 = 2$, as if the 'arts of resistance' can easily win the war and gain an equal footing with the power center, and create a merger of equal opportunity. An analysis of interaction without time and hierarchy would miss the point and can hardly explain sudden bursts of hostility and riots some time after the merger. Hybridity does not replace the corresponding old trait in a culture but is juxtaposed to it in function.¹⁹ Borrowing does not necessarily mean indiscriminate blending. We should agree that 'Incorporation of the ideology of the dominant group . . . does not represent a triumph of hegemonic discourse but rather a successful challenge mounted on the center' (Turton, 2000: 26). We should also recognize that it is only a challenge. Hierarchy and power still hold, especially for the embodiment of ethnicity in a new age of globalized flows of capital and information, and madness for roots.

Hierarchy does not mean 'fixity' either.²⁰ Dualistic structuralism also excludes the role of time and disrupts the link between the past and present in linguistic process (Pomorska and Rudy, 1985: ix). Order can change over time. Western (including Japanese) anthropologists have helped bring up a new generation of 'native' anthropologists with different linguistic, cultural or identity backgrounds, serving as incubators that produce transnational spin-offs. These new orders ignore, condemn, even nullify the previously held hierarchies and they themselves can also suffer the same fate at any time. However, the nullification of the previous hierarchies will create new hierarchies into which ethnicity finds its way. Here we spot an emerging platform of multi-voices for 'nativization', where ethnically embodied anthropologists from China are enmeshed in a real or imagined culturally hierarchical topography. 'Sinicization' of anthropology, with the full support of metropolitan dons and their followers, with digitalized printing technology and a wider readership, has been put on top of the topography, while the 'ethnicization' efforts by minority advocates, who lack such priorities, have to be content with their pigeonholes down below.²¹ Both are 'nativizing' efforts, but their versions, treatment, visions and hidden meanings differ. Whether you like it or not, ethnicity is part and parcel of the 'nativization' endeavor, uncomfortably situated in the pecking order of scholarship, behind which there are cultural embodiments of different breeds.

Linguistic relativity²²

The French are most sensitive about their language. Even in China we know that quite well. We learnt in school how a French schoolmaster emotionally taught his pupils to love their French mother-tongue when their hometown was under German occupation. One of our colleagues recently wrote a letter in broken French to a research institute in France and received a warm letter beginning with 'Thank you for writing the letter in French.' French literature on anthropology is directly translated far less than English. Works by Foucault, Bourdieu and other French authors were largely introduced via English translations. Anglo-Saxon anthropology, be it updated with French-German methodology and theoretics, is in the mainstream in China as elsewhere.

In the same vein, anthropology in China is under the sway of Mandarin. Not a single published textbook of anthropology is written in Mongolian, Tibetan, Uyghur, Miao, Yi, or in any other of the 17 minorities' traditional written scripts. Han field studies are well known within the mainstream anthropological camp and even beyond, while other studies are less known or even unknown to scholars studying the Han. Is it because of Han cultural centrism? Is it because of reverse orientalism on the part of minority scholars? Is it because of language barriers or lack of resources? Is it because of historically maintained centre-periphery hierarchy? It could be an interactive blending of all these.

There are some felt linguistic demarcations or boundaries along the line of 'ethnicity' among anthropologists in China. No doubt, those who have the 'gift' of English have easy access to all kinds of 'capitals' (visiting scholarships, international conferences, latest versions of new theories, academic debates and so forth). To make it more complicated and intriguing, there is a Japanese tradition represented by a different strain of anthropologists who learnt to use Japanese and had the chance to stay in Japan for a period of time. These different linguistic strains of 'native' anthropologists have had more chance to meet at international conferences than domestic ones, as if comparative studies are possible only in the West, where they are used in a search for exotica. As Esteban Krotz argues, the socio-cultural origin of an anthropologist influences his point of departure, development and results.

[T]his influence will vary when the researchers are part of the same national (socioeconomic, religious, regional imbalance, ethnic, gender and age group, etc.) system as those they study, or when they usually live in individual and socio-cultural conditions totally different from those of the people that they are temporarily observing or even living with. (1997: 244)

We should admit that 'influence' does not mean 'determination'; anthropologists of the same cultural origin can have different points of departure, development and results, and those of different social upbringing can

reach paradigmatic or theoretic agreement. Disagreement or agreement, it is a matter of degree and gradation rather than absolute cut-offs.

In China, and not only in China, 'linguistic relativity' is at the same time politico-economic relativity that is based on a global flow of ideological discourse. With a market economy looming large in China, minorities are on the losing end with regard to both language and culture. There are three lines of argument over language teaching in Hohhot, capital of Inner Mongolia. One suggests that, for native Mongolian-speaking children at the level of higher-middle school, Chinese should replace Mongolian. One argues that Mongolian is a vital carrier of native culture and that it is against state policies to mutilate the Mongolian language. The last advocates trilingualism, the learning of Mongolian, Chinese and either English or Japanese (Bilik, 1998: 48–51). Here cultural revival can mean different things for Han and non-Han. While Confucian temples are rebuilt by the Han to resist Western cultural invasion, a Chinggis Khan mausoleum is repaired by Mongols in parallel. The Naxi are busy reconstructing their own images by re-presenting their matrilineality and their Dongba pictographic writing. The Yi are rewriting and retelling their history of civilization. Jumping the pecking order, some Mongolian and Uyghur native speakers go abroad and pick up English, Turkish and Japanese, bypassing Mandarin. To a moderate extent, Mongolian anthropologists, Uyghur anthropologists, Yi anthropologists and Tibetan anthropologists have each formed their own camp.

There are not as many Han anthropologists studying minority cultures now as in the past. We can offer some reasons. As previously mentioned, at first the Western-trained anthropologists in China were re-educated, had to reject their previous academic discipline and go to work only on the non-Han Identification Project. They had had to stop their Han studies, denounced as 'bourgeois'. Then, due to moneyless research conditions, they could not go abroad to conduct fieldwork. Reacting to this and working within the limits of many constraints, political considerations included, subsequent generations of anthropologists are now reluctant to study minorities, even less learn their languages. Psychological and linguistic barriers stand in their way to Other cultures, a nice coincidence with the postmodernist thought: Study Your Own Culture! What is more, it is a tradition that dates back to the major anthropological work conducted by Professors Fei Xiaotong and Lin Yaohua during the 1930s and 1940s, who did fieldwork in their hometowns. Third, other academic genealogies, which also originated from the West, such as Mongology, Tibetology, Uyghurology, Yi Studies and Dai Studies, coexist with anthropology. These '-ologies' or 'studies' are usually tripartite systems that include linguistics, literature and history, each with its own corpus of jargon and practice. These esoteric trades of learning rely heavily on textual research, mainly in Chinese, and have developed a linguistic and disciplinary centrism, allowing no alien branches of learning, anthropology included, to step in. Fourth, minority scholars intimidate their Han colleagues by accusing them of not knowing

the target language and therefore being ignorant of the cultural essence the language carries.

Nation-building complex

Western thought, via Japan and Russia, has had great influence and continues to function in a localized way in China and the interpretation of its history. The ideal of 'One Nation, One State' matches easily the trajectory of Chinese History.²³ China of the olden times used to center itself on a vast expanse of land with imagined 'civilized' boundaries that were marked out according to the judgment of the Center of knowledge, orthography, codification, and an authority of civility and cultural sophistication. The greatest difference of emphasis in Western thinking about nation-building is the way territorial sovereignty, in its physical and substantial sense, is fought over, negotiated, defined and redefined. It is, however, not difficult for a modern China to adjust its focus of vision from Center to Peripheries, from imagining to materializing. Imperial rights of nomination and naming substantiated in the treasured and effective literary canon, traditionally reinforced by the visual arts of landscape painting and calligraphy, are held in high esteem and are still in force. The efforts to build a modern nation-state parallel those of re-codification through re-identification and reclassification. In terms of 'ethnicity' or something nearer to the term, New China organized many campaigns to identify, classify and rename, in a normalized and politicized fashion, its minority groups. Officially designated institutions and experts constructed a 'literary' standard for grammars of *unwritten* minority languages, new or revised Latin-based scripts were introduced for them, ethnonyms and language names were granted. Here we have the structure of languages and power in China:

- (1) The national standard, Mandarin Chinese.
- (2) *Regional standard languages*, including regional varieties of Mandarin Chinese and regional minority standards, such as Yi, Mongolian, Tibetan and Uyghur.
- (3) *Primary minority languages*, those with historical and/or modern prestige, usually large populations, and moderate political clout. These include Qazaq, Korean, Manchu, Zhuang, Naxi and the non-standard Chinese dialects.
- (4) *Secondary minority (or sub-minority) languages*, including numbers of speakers with no clout such as Evenki, Salar and Va. Often these groups have larger numbers of speakers elsewhere, hence their designation as Dispersed Nationalities by the government.
- (5) *Unrecognized languages*, usually unclassified mixed languages such as Wutun (Gansu) and Aynu (Xinjiang). (Dwyer, 1998: 71)

For academics, including anthropologists, in China there is an *unwritten* grammar of 'ethnicity' in their scholarly pursuits. China's anthropologists, like other scholarly communities at large, are no more an independent 'class' or 'stratum' than their counterparts beyond the political boundaries.

Their mental imaginations and physical conditions have long been tied to the fate of various nation-building efforts of the state by way of re-education, working in the field or workshops during the Anti-Rightist Campaign, the Cultural Revolution, and others. Some of them have been rebuilt and remolded into the nation-building complex and tend to look at things, as if by a touch of contagious magic, in line with the center, throwing themselves deep into a Chinese version of French Revolution.

The story for anthropologists of minority origins is more complex. They have to keep a watchful eye on where they set foot. Their recent broken history is still beyond the reach of structural amnesia.²⁴ Their fathers or grandfathers had fought for self-determination with the full support from the Third International and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)²⁵ at an earlier stage. They had then to change position with the changing world political configuration and military landscape. All 'ethnic' parties, organized directly or indirectly by the Third International, disbanded themselves and collectively joined the CPC. This historical switchover took many of their lives. They were charged with treason, put in jail, tortured, humiliated, and died a brutal or suicidal death. All these, together with historical records and folktales about inter-ethnic fighting and slaughter, were built into the upbringing of the next generations. Generations have not yet stretched far enough to forget this history. They are willing to join and have indeed joined the nation-building efforts, but are worried and mistrustful.

Their Han counterpart has a different version of recent broken history,²⁶ embedded in hatred for the Eight-Power Allied Forces that took humiliating and devastating revenge for the Boxer Rebellion and for the later Japanese invaders. All are 'foreign devils'. Han society has revived Confucianism and many cultural and social traditions that suffered persecution during the May Fourth Movement of the 1920s and the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, as a form of resistance against foreign material and financial advantage. However, such cultural revivals are 'ethnically' coloured and minorities with their traditions are doubly marginalized due to the fact that they must face up to both foreign 'capitalist' culture and Han Confucian tradition. Bounded by the sovereignty of a nation-state, that is, China, both Han and minority anthropologists are positioned and fixed in culturally tripartite nation-building efforts. In such an irreversible endeavor, how to balance the elements or rather relations of elements, categorized as the Western, the Han and the minorities, is a really delicate and intriguing operation. Anthropologists who are based in Beijing or similar metropolises are not yet prepared to confront such a scenario, since not many minority colleagues are within reach for them. And we must record that the whole army of anthropologists, in its strict sense, is far smaller in number than, say, that of sociologists, even less of historians and literateurs.

Encompassment and partibility: discourse that makes sense

This description of the academic 'ethnicity' curtain I have unfolded, not without reluctance, is not just intended to sound a cautionary note. We need to balance essentialism with constructionism, particularism with universalism. 'But the dialectic of this process is that of growth and not death, that of clarification and not the installation or advent of a new dark age, where only idiosyncratic approaches are celebrated at the expense of consensual or shared understandings' (Prah, 1997: 442).

To redress the balance, do we need a Mongolian anthropology, a Tibetan anthropology or something similar to *Anthropologies of the South*? Can we really find or create and maintain the boundaries between 'us' and 'others'? In discussing Sahlins's account of Polynesian 'heroic history' with regard to the fact that chiefs used the pronoun 'I' in reference to their whole group and his consequent emphasis on 'encompassment' as 'the modality of chiefly action' (1981: 13–14, 1985: 35–6), and Strathern's on 'partibility', 'the *effacement* of parts of the person as a condition of action' (1988: 272–8), Alan Rumsey argues 'that moments of both encompassment and partibility are inherent in language . . . and that close attention to the interaction between the two can yield new insights into the nature of personhood and social agency' (2000: 101). Here I would further develop his theorizing, though my use may not be faithful to his original insight, and argue that anthropological encompassment (universalism) and partibility (particularism) are also 'mutually presupposing dimensions of social interaction'. If our discourse is meaningful then it should contain both 'odds' and 'evens'. Differences and particularities create information, similarities or generalities make decoding possible. China's anthropology should be put in the globalized academic milieu, which is based on relations of relations rather than relations of elements.

Among those relations are the isolating constraints of official and academic life in China, the work unit and the continuing effects of the designation Ethnology (*minzuxue*) and of the Identification Project. With the work unit come expectations of family-like loyalty. They silence or at least mute academic criticism of unit colleagues, but they do not prevent internal tensions and factions, which in turn reinforce personal ties of loyalty. But younger, particularly foreign-trained academics have been able to some extent to break free from such constraints and form ties of friendship across institutional and 'ethnic' boundaries. Here lies hope for an academic profession of anthropology, with its own standards of fieldwork and academic criticism, with more case studies and more exchanges between fieldworkers, whatever their nationality. Workshops where case studies are presented and discussed could include chief informants from the cases studied and thus networks of lateral scope will increase contact not only between academics but also between their subjects, breaking down the isolating categorizations of state.

Whatever the locale, we do not need to treat it as either a representative variant of some essential 'China' or of a non-Chinese minority. But it is certainly a locale of the Chinese state. Reflecting this fact in the spectral academic world is the severe restraint on using cross-border comparative regions such as 'Inner Asia' made famous in English by Owen Lattimore (1951). Yet even this constraint can be gently challenged. It is for instance possible for China-based anthropologists to contribute to foreign-organized symposia on Central Asia or Oasis Society. Foreign connections and foreign funds help with the holding of workshops and other occasions for crossings of institutional and sovereign borders. But before going to town with the deconstruction of the ethnic categories of the Identification Project, academic front-runners should stop to consider some of its positive benefits. Among them have been and still are a degree of political autonomy and use of the local language to high levels of local government and academic qualification. Deconstruction can become a recommendation for the dissolution of such privileges, and play into the hands of policy makers who favour top-down assimilation, taking away the choice that should remain with locals to retain or reject their language, and to stake or not to stake claims to separate culture-cum-nationality. What is needed are more voices in the same space, not a dissolution and homogenization of cultural and political space.

'Consuetudinary jeremiads' is a useful phrase to describe our emotional condition, but it is not going to prevent us from communicating with colleagues at home and abroad with an open mind. The ethnicity of China's anthropologists should create a chorus of a new universal anthropology that consists of anthropologies that should not necessarily limit themselves by 'ethnic' boundaries. When we tend to entangle ourselves in a single boundary, be it 'ethnic', linguistic, cultural, behavioral, political, economical, we should disentangle ourselves by thinking beyond and within it: beyond, there are other boundaries; within, there are other subgroupings or individuals. Partibility, as far as our individual body and mind are concerned, is limited and limitable; encompassment, relatively speaking, is unlimited and illimitable. To make our discourse sensible we must know there are many boundaries out there, substantiated both in the imagination and physically, objectified, and reified. To make our discourse enduring and sustainable, however, we have to learn and grasp the possibilities of extroversion and introversion across boundaries.

Criticism of Eurocentric and Hancentric exotica or narcissism is only effective within the frame of reference we are sketching, otherwise it makes no sense. When we deny that there is something in our mind, it has been there already. This is where one of the dimensions of Foucauldian greatness lies: we share and are part of power, hierarchy, exotica, narcissism and many other aspects that a hegemony imposes on us and against which we launch severe criticism. Each of us has been born into a pre-installed structure or frame of reference without a choice of our own. Such is the way

Time punishes us. Still we do not give up. On the basis of recognition of the inequality we are born into and brought up with, we fight it out together, hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder with the prejudiced environment, beyond the pale of 'ethnicity', freeing ourselves from the chains of farfetched and self-defeating and exaggerated over-essentialized narcissism.

Mongolian anthropology, Tibetan anthropology, *Anthropologies of the South* or not, they should never replace the singular, universalized or universalizing Anthropology at a much higher level. Particularism or essentialism is just one end of the dialectic relationship, which substantiates it when unified with universalism. Put another way, they are two sides of the same coin. Individuality makes things more dependent on each other.²⁷ To deny this is to cut oneself off.

Notes

1

Before the founding of the People's Republic of China, it had never been made clear how many ethnic minorities there were in China. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, to implement the policy of equality among ethnic groups in an all-round way the state has organized large-scale investigations since 1953 to identify the ethnic groups. Proceeding from conditions both past and present and in accordance with the principle of combination of scientific identification and the wishes of the given ethnic group, every group which accords with the conditions for an ethnic group is identified as a single ethnic group, regardless of its level of social development and the sizes of its inhabited area and population. By 1954, the Chinese government had identified 38 ethnic groups in all, after careful investigation and study. By 1964, the Chinese government had identified another 15 ethnic groups. With the addition of the Lhoba ethnic group, identified in 1965, and the Jino ethnic group, identified in 1979, there are 55 minority ethnic groups which have been formally recognized and made known to the public. Now, in New China, many minority ethnic groups which had not been recognized by the rulers of old China have been recognized as they should, and they all enjoy equal rights with other ethnic groups in China. (Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 1999).

2 The Chinese short title for this project is *Shaoshu Minzu Shibie*, translatable as the National Minorities Identification Project.

3 '*Etnografija*' in Russian literally equals to 'ethnography', but it is often translated as *minzu xue*, namely, 'ethnology'. Actually, the Russian term '*etnologia*' is reserved for theory while '*etnografija*' is for description.

4 One explanation given by Professor Fei Xiaotong states that after the founding of the New China, the government needed to establish a People's Congress of supreme power, representing all nationalities (or ethnic groups), thereby realizing the Marxist thought of people's dictatorship. No one, however, could then tell convincingly the number of nationalities and their languages in

China, nor their extant conditions (Fei, 1996). Hence the Identification Project became a paramount political task.

5

All nationalities are now undergoing rapid changes, and we may have difficulty in correctly grasping the lingering history they experienced if we for a while failed to make timely record of the original social features. Each nationality will have developed their nationality consciousness by then and they will have strong feelings for their ethnohistory, and will inevitably ask for scientific evidence for their history, for clarification of their position in the national history. (Fei, 1988: 115–20)

6

Imperialists conducted research of Chinese minorities to serve their aggression purpose . . . trying their best to invent and spread theoretical basis for all kinds of splits and fragmentation, at the expense of telling lies, fabricating history and facts, covering up true history and facts, in a bid to split the unity of the Chinese nationalities, dismembering China, and by all farfetched means to link Chinese nationalities to imperialism. (Liu, 1996: 74–93)

7 'There are no racial aliens from the Chinese nationalities, and China has no colonies . . . the ethnology we need is different in nature from that of the Euro-American style' (Cen, 1992).

8 In Chinese discourse, Han scholars are 'native' in Western eyes while their minority colleagues are also 'native' in the Han taxonomy. It hints at a 'pecking order' (Hu, 2000).

9 As our previous analysis goes, Han studies in the West is represented by anthropology and Sinology, while in China it is sociology. Such a blending partly explains the continual entangling of sociology with anthropology in China today. Recently, the Academic Degree Committee of the State Council has moved the affiliation of anthropology from under 'ethnology' to under 'sociology'; this rings a bell. There is a structural 'family resemblance' to the West: the mainstream 'nationality' is studied by sociology while the sideline 'nationalities' are dealt with by 'ethnology' or 'anthropology'. So the decision is, let's put the anthropological studies of the Han (West) and the sociological studies of the Han (China) together! What is left for 'minority' studies? Soviet-style ethnology or its later version of 'nationality studies'. According to Hu Hongbao, the term *minzu* (nationality, *ethnie*) of that time has become by default synonymous with 'minorities', which has in part led to an understanding that 'ethnology' does not study the Han (Hu, 2000). Ironically, the same Academic Degree Committee of the State Council has placed the 'revolutionized' version of 'ethnology', that is, 'nationality studies', to the rank of top-level disciplines, parallel with the top-level sociology that covers anthropology as secondary discipline.

10 Professor Wang Ningsheng points out that many investigation subjects of academic value were forbidden at the time and that reports were full of political platitudes, forcing reality into the procrustean model of Marxist class analysis (Wang, 1996: 8).

11 There is no contradiction in the fact that anthropological fieldwork carried out in Yunnan, one of the most important field sites in southwest China, by Han anthropologists, has been mostly in minority areas.

12 There are over 10 anthropologists and folklorists of Mongolian origin within and outside China, who received degrees or training from the UK or USA. The

- Yi also have more than six anthropologists and folklorists with the same academic background. Gelek, now vice-chair of the Tibetology Center, was the first PhD in cultural anthropology in China. However, their voices are seldom heard and seldom actively join important exchanges at the national level.
- 13 Mongolian scholars trained in Cambridge, UK, set up a Social Anthropology Center at the Inner Mongolia Teachers' University during the 1990s, to the launching ceremony of which came Dr Caroline Humphrey, now professor of social anthropology at Cambridge. However, these Mongolian coordinators did not inform their Han colleagues in other parts of China, either because they did not know them or had no such intention. Recently, Inner Mongolia University has also set up an anthropology research group, and they only invited Mongolian anthropologists in Beijing to be associated with them as visiting professors.
 - 14 It is a traditional socialist workplace that takes care of everything for the staff, such as marriage, funerals, welfare and housing.
 - 15 'Embodiment is a term that collapses the duality of mind and body, then, essentially by infusing body with mind' (Strathern, 1996: 181).
 - 16 'A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture' (Stalin, 1942: 12). In the Chinese version, *minzu* used to be translated as 'nationality', which was supposed to embrace the 'four commons'. In recent years, however, the English term 'ethnic group' has more often been used to designate what is *minzu* in Chinese. This is an official change.
 - 17 The Mongolian term for 'selling' is *khudaldahu*, which shares the same word root with 'cheating' (*khudal*). It is commonly held that traditional Mongols do not know how to bargain. (However, it depends where they come from. There has been no lack of Mongolian liars.)
 - 18 Bulag (1998) and Yang (2000) both use the term 'hybridity' to refer to the blending of traditional and foreign elements through political, economic and cultural encounters. There is no denying that such 'hybridity' existed, exists and will exist. But it has never lost its 'hierarchical ordering', that is, the local society has its 'stubborn' cultural grammar that tends to resist sudden changes at the core.
 - 19 'Indeed, a sociology of interaction would be likely to miss the problem and find sudden bursts of hostility and riots hard to explain. . . . The crucial point is that coexistence has produced no general ideological synthesis' (Dumont, 1970: 96).
 - 20 For example, facing the West, both Han and minority scholars are 'ethnicized' as subjects of anthropological research agenda despite the fact that when they are left alone it is thought that only the 'minorities' ethnicize, not the majority Han.
 - 21 It is most difficult nowadays to publish anthropological works in Mongolian or other minority languages. The previous preferential policies for publishing ethnic researches are no longer in force. Publishers would rather publish less in minority languages and more in Chinese to prevent further nosedives in their economic situation.
 - 22 The 'Sapir-Whorf hypothesis' proposes that the structure of a language will affect the way in which speakers of that language think (Barnard and Spencer, 1996: 499). Here I use it to refer, however, to the 'ethnicity' of a particular language (in China) that will affect the way in which speakers (anthropologists) of that language practice, since the nature of language is a social tool and

- speaking is a cultural practice (Duranti, 1997: 1), or, if we follow Vygotsky, 'the use of language creates consciousness and even free will' (Bruner, 1987: 1).
- 23 Here I refer to the orthodox version of Chinese history by capitalizing it.
 - 24 In the Nuer way of reckoning genealogy, 'lineages spring from very few names' while others drop out, so that only certain lines of descent are remembered. 'Also, in those lines that persist names drop out of the steps in ascent to the founder of the clan, so that the distance in generations from the founder of a clan to the present day remains fairly constant' (Evans-Pritchard, 1940: 198–200).
 - 25 It appears nowadays more as the 'Communist Party of China' (CPC) in such official English newspapers as *China Daily*.
 - 26 Here not taken into account are the minority conquerors of China in history, which can easily fuel hatred and resentment.
 - 27

[In quantum physics] . . . the individuality of the elementary particles is the more attenuated the more they are engaged in interaction. As, on the one hand, there is no completely isolated particle and as, on the other hand, the bonding of the particles into a system is practically never sufficiently complete for something of their individuality not to remain, it can be seen that reality seems in general to lie somewhere between the concept of autonomous individuality and the concept of a completely fused system. (Dumont, 1970: 40)

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