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Constructing Chineseness as a Spectacle: An Analysis of the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games

Although with an alleged underpinning cosmopolitanism and egalitarianism, the Olympic Games, as a huge spectacle, have always been the best opportunity of the hosting city and country to promote themselves and to articulate nationalism. Under the pressure from international community and its own citizenry, China has been longing to change its international image while simultaneously reinforcing its national identity. This article aims to examine how the new image of China, or the new Chineseness, is constructed and promoted in the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games. In this examination, specific critical attention will be paid to the dominant discourses as articulated during the ceremony: that of China's alleged grand civilization, the ideology of Harmony and the successful road to modernness. By critiquing the spectacle and the discourses of the Opening Ceremony, this paper calls for new, more inclusive and less hegemonic ways to articulate Chineseness.