

DRU C. GLADNEY (ed), *Making Majorities: Constituting The Nation In Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and The United States*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 1999, pp. 350, £11.95, US\$ 19.95

This volume is well worth the read. It contains a wealth of good case studies and some interesting comparative insights in a heretofore unexamined area of ethnicity and nationalism studies. Currently, ethnic studies remains wedded to the embryo of 'minority studies' first spawned by American sociologists of the Chicago school in the 1920s. Meanwhile, nationalism scholars remain entranced by the political machinations of states, their nation-building projects, and their secessionist minorities. Consequently, the study of majority ethnic groups tends to fall into the gaps in this scholarly net.

Even where the historic connections between ethnicity and nationalism have been exposed to scholarly enquiry, as in the work of Anthony Smith and John Hutchinson, little sustained attention is directed toward the *contemporary* dynamics of dominant-group ethnicity. Other references to dominant ethnicity do not extend beyond one or two articles, encyclopedia contributions and cursory references to 'charter groups,' 'homeland nationalisms,' or 'staatsvolks.'

Gladney's work inadvertently contributes toward our understanding of majority ethnies. I say inadvertently because Gladney is largely unaware of the gaps in the existing ethnicity/nationalism literature. Instead, Gladney and his contributors advance a different agenda which emerges from the scholars' background in anthropology and Asia-Pacific studies. Their mandate, as outlined by Gladney, is threefold: to problematize the notion of 'majority' groups, to challenge the widely-held view that Asian nations are ethnically homogeneous, and, finally, to interrogate Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations' paradigm. That this volume succeeds despite this somewhat chaotic menu and the homage paid to

postmodernist icons (ie. 'alterity', 'Other') is a tribute to the richness of the core contributions and the originality of Gladney's focus on majorities.

There are fourteen contributions to this book, in addition to Gladney's introduction. The contributions are grouped in seven pairs corresponding to the title's cases: Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the United States. These broadly address the majority ethnic group in each case, though in nearly half the contributions, the focus is primarily on ethnic minorities and their interaction with the state. Articles tend to provide a history of the development of majority discourse (ie. dominant-group ethnogenesis) and the changing boundaries of 'majority' and 'minority' over time. In some of the contributions, historical material is complemented by ethnographic or documentary analysis. Unfortunately, there is no conclusion to tie together the pieces, which is a weakness of the text.

With the exception of the American example, I came away with an improved understanding of the cases in question, and a sense of thematic coherence. The authors cleave to a constructivist approach in an attempt to deconstruct the 'naturalness' of majorities and minorities, but generally do not allow their iconoclastic enthusiasms to run too far away from the evidence. The pieces by Yoshino on Japanese cultural nationalism in the 70s and 80s, Kendall on Korean Shamanism and cultural revivalism, Shamsul and Milner on the construction of the Malay majority, Kaplan on Fijian ethnic dominance, and Kirişçi on the shifting boundaries of Turkishness/Kurdishness are particularly outstanding.

These contributions tend to follow the Gellnerian proposition that pre-modern societies in Asia were organized as imperial or dynastic polities, with localized and

religious identity for the mass of the peasantry, and cosmopolitan identity for the elite. There is also an emphasis upon the fluidity of pre-modern cultural constructions - hence the curiosity that an early nineteenth century Malay ethno-nationalist was of Arab-Indian origin, while an early articulator of Turkish ethnicity in the Ottoman empire was of Albanian descent. (pp 155, 219) The authors tend to contend that ethnogenesis in these cases was typically a modern, and often a twentieth century construction driven by the nationalizing state or colonial administrators. They often discuss the range of competing ethnic narratives (ie. Greater v. Lesser homelands) and the political circumstances which shaped the choice of a particular option.

This is not a new perspective, but the array of facts marshaled to support it is impressive. Even so, one may legitimately ask why these ethnic constructions succeeded. In other words, if constructions are wholly contingent, why is it the case that élites appealed to ancestry rather than status in many of the cases considered? Why, for instance, would the Fijian or Malay elite not enter into an alliance with wealthy minorities - as occurred in numerous pre-modern situations. Why were colonialists unsuccessful in creating strong imperial identities? Clearly, a purely constructivist account cannot provide the answer to these questions.

In fairness, a number of authors admit that modes of identity in pre-modernity, notably in Malaysia and Turkey, did include notions of time and place that influenced later acceptance of 'invented' myths. But they might also have made reference to the suggestive role of pre-modern polities like the Javanese or Chinese empires which (temporarily) united large swathes of territory and thereby introduced the idea of a

Javanese or Chinese political memory - thus furnishing the basis for subsequent constructions.

Overall, Gladney must be credited with setting a coherent and original structure for the book that delivers, though, as noted, the volume omits the direct comparative analysis that is usually provided by a conclusion. It also loses focus by including less relevant American material. On this note, Handler's theoretical exegesis and Okamura's Hawaiian case seem to have been tacked on as an afterthought. Handler's work combines a standard American cultural critique with an attempt to theorize the problematic of the book - neither of which comes off well. Okamura's piece is more interesting, but fails to engage with similar comparative cases (ie. Fiji) or broader theoretical horizons in nationalism theory. On bizarre result is Okamura's advocacy of Hawaiian ethnic nationalism over multiculturalism - a stance which runs directly counter to that of this volume's other contributors, particularly as regards Fijian and Malay ethnic hegemony. This would not be so problematic if it were made explicit, but, since the volume lacks a conclusion, we have no way of knowing whether it is intended to complement or confront the book's general perspective.

In summary, this compilation, though somewhat unsatisfactory at the theoretical level, provides an important contribution to debates in the field of ethnicity and nationalism and is therefore well worth the purchase price.