

Feb. 3, 2005

## 2: ETHNIC IDENTITY I

Read: Gladney 1-24  
Nagel 3-13  
Eriksen 1-17

- I. Ethnicity as a topic of study
  - A. We're studying it because interest in ethnic and national identity has surged
    1. Scholarship on it has increased
    2. Certainly much more important in the world than 15 years ago
  - B. As Eriksen points out, many people felt that ethnicity and nationalism were incompatible with "modernity" and would disappear—we'd all become a global village ruled by the UN
- II. Why didn't ethnic and national loyalties continue to diminish, as everyone predicted?
  - A. As Eriksen notes, most present-day conflict involves ethnic groups one way or another
    1. In 1991: 35 of the 37 major armed conflicts were internal and most of them could plausibly be described as ethnic conflicts
      - a. Some conflicts are non-violent (Quebecois independence movement)
    2. Ethnic conflict—of both the violent and non-violent kinds—occurs much more frequently today
- III. Explanations:
  - A. Structural factor 1: Colonialism
    1. Breakup of colonial holdings
      - a. Newly independent nations tend to be culturally diverse
      - b. Examples of New Guinea; India
      - c. Colonial powers deliberately created colonies that divided up the territories belonging to pre-existing social/cultural groups

- d. Divide and conquer strategy
  - 1) Look at a political map of Africa, then look at a map of tribes and kingdoms
  - 2) No congruence—on purpose
  - 3) Indonesia the best current example—an archipelago highly culturally diverse
  
- 2. A brief note on **empire** (the European colonial powers—Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands—were building empires)
  - a. Empires by definition are multicultural
    - 1) They're made up of diverse conquered peoples
  - b. Empire-builders have cared about building a strong **state**
    - 1) But not interested in building a strong **nation**—in the sense of a citizenry that sees itself as one people, one culture, one language, etc.
      - a) Empires have worked against colonized peoples being able to foster nationalist sentiment
  - c. A general policy of divide and conquer is characteristic of colonialism
  - d. This is why so many newly independent countries have found it extremely difficult to unify the populations within their borders
    - 1) Example: a very bloody civil war in Nigeria in 1967-68: Biafrans wanted to secede
  - e. Sun Yat Sen's quest for building a nation (in Gladney reading)
    - 1) Wanted to cast off the yoke of colonialism—the British empire
  - f. Remember: empires are states, but they aren't nations, using our definition above
    - 1) That several empires were quite successful demonstrates that they did not need to be a nation

3. Other kinds of ethnic conflict also stem from history of colonization
  - a. Religious conflict in Ireland
    - 1) Which was the first British colony—prior to establishing the 13 American colonies
    - 2) The country is still living out that legacy today—there's much more to it than Protestant/Catholic antagonism
  - b. The same for Indonesia—currently the site of horrific religious conflict
- B. Structural factor 2: has to do with how post-colonial states have been reconfigured
  1. The populations that were “tribes,” “aboriginals”, etc. in the colony, are now considered “ethnic minorities”
    - a. Sometimes called the “fourth world”—small-scale ethnic minorities enclaved within a third-world state
  2. Modern third-world states have tried to assimilate, or at least control these 4<sup>th</sup>-world populations
    - a. They resist
      - 1) Example: the Kurds resisting the states of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey
- C. Structural factor 3: increase in the number of people located in diasporas (away from their homeland)
  1. Move to other countries
    - a. Because of capitalism's need for cheap labor
    - b. Countries also take in refugees fleeing violence
    - c. These countries can end up containing very different types of people
      - 1) Laotians in Texas; Hmong in California, Turks and Pakistanis in Germany and Scandinavia

- d. With ethnic conflict sometimes resulting (true for all of the above groups)

D. Structural factor 4: end of the Cold War

1. Breakup of the Soviet Union and its satellite countries (E. Europe)
  - a. New countries, with new assertions of national identity
2. Many socialist states saw ethnic loyalties as regressive
  - a. Repressed ethnic, religious activities
  - b. Yugoslavia, within the Soviet Union itself, Ethiopia, Tanzania (no distinct ethnic groups in Cuba)
3. Ethnic conflict followed

E. Structural factor 5: Globalizing processes, transnationalism

1. Western Europe: formation of the European Union resulted in less power for the nation-state
2. More power for regions within European countries
3. Spaces have opened up in which to assert ethnicity
4. Examples of, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, many others
5. Spain is an example: regions like Catalonia have become much stronger
  - a. Like the Soviet Union; Spain under the dictator Franco was very repressive of nationalist struggles
  - b. We might see them all as Spaniards, but regional identity is strong there, and in other parts of Europe
6. There's a movement in northern Italy to secede from the rest of the country

IV. Ethnic identity has become more important, more salient, more significant to the holders of the identity themselves

- A. People are claiming their identity in ways they didn't before

1. Nagel's book explores American Indians respects reversing the previous trajectory of assimilation
  2. Other indigenous peoples a similar story
    - a. In some cases there was too much repression and people hid or denied their identity
      - 1) El Salvador<sup>1</sup> is an example
  - B. Several theories as to why this is happening
    1. The explanation Eriksen and many others offer: more anxiety, fear of cultural standardization, McDonaldization of the world
      - a. We'll search for answers throughout the course
- V. How to study the meanings of concepts like "Ethnicity," "Ethnic"
- A. First look at history of the meaning of the word: for example, "ethnic"
    1. An earlier meaning was heathen or pagan
    2. The term subsequently was used to refer to "racial" characteristics (in the mid-nineteenth century)
    3. Then came to be a polite term for Jews, Italians, Irish—populations the majority considered to be inferior
  - B. Then look at current meanings: scholarly meanings and general meanings
  - C. Scholarly meanings:
    1. Ethnicity refers to classifications of people, and refers to relationships
      - a. Two (or more) groups must be in contact with each other—ethnic groups do not exist as isolates
      - b. And entertain ideas of members of one group being culturally different from the other
    2. Scholarship often encounters problems in classification and analysis

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<sup>1</sup> See Tilley VQ. 2002. New help or new hegemony? the transnational indigenous peoples' movement and "Being Indian" in El Salvador. *J. Lat. Amer. Stud.* 34(3):525-554.

3. Gladney asks, who are the Chinese? Who are the Hui?
    - a. Both Eriksen and Gladney mention the Lue as an example of problems
  4. Many scholars conclude that self-ascription is the best definition
    - a. Don't worry about difficult terms you find in your reading (e.g., "...emic category of ascription")
    - b. This approach pays attention to groups that consider themselves as culturally distinctive...metaphoric or fictive kinship...myths of common origin, encourage endogamy (marriage within the group)
    - c. A very different view from the usual one that ethnic groups are definable by objective cultural characteristics
    - d. Yet self-definition can produce problems—a census taker wants more evidence
- D. Non-scholarly, everyday meanings of “ethnic”
1. “Ethnic” usually refers to a perspective from the majority applied to others
  2. It refers to a *relationship*
    - a. Will be a term referring to inferiority unless one asserts one is also an ethnic
    - b. Can WASPs (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants in the USA) be “ethnic”?
- E. To study the meaning of a word we also have to compare it to related words
1. Our syllabus is organized this way
  2. Eriksen does the same thing
  3. Eriksen compares “ethnicity” and “race”
    - a. Discusses the notion that ethnicity refers more to group identification, and race is more oriented to the categorization of “them”
    - b. But they both tend to stress common descent among the members

4. The relationship between ethnicity and nationality is equally complicated
  - a. Nationalism: holds that political boundaries should be coterminous with cultural boundaries
  
5. Social class
  - a. Social theorist Karl Marx saw industrial society to be made up of 3 classes
    - 1) Defined in economic terms
    - 2) Defined according to the class's relationship to production
    - 3) The capitalists or bourgeoisie own the means of production
    - 4) The petit-bourgeoisie own the means of production but don't employ others (e.g., artisans)
    - 5) The proletariat or working class, who sell their labor
    - 6) Sometimes a 4<sup>th</sup> is included: the *lumpenproletariat*, unemployed or underemployed
  - b. You might think about how this classification system works, and does not work, in present-day post-industrial society
  - c. Another social theorist, Max Weber, used several criteria
    - 1) Income
    - 2) Education
    - 3) Political influence
  - d. In general there are 2 kinds of relationship between social class and ethnicity:
    - 1) An ethnic group may or may not be internally ranked—contain more than one social class
    - 2) And there may be a high correlation between ethnicity and class in a given society: this often happens

## VI. The China example

- A. China has usually been seen as huge homogeneous, monocultural nation
  - 1. It has had long history of empire-building (and falling)
  - 2. Heavily affected by European colonialism (although never formally under a given colonial state)
  
- B. Gladney asks specifically, what does it mean to be Hui in the Chinese nation-state?
  - 1. He discusses a “new feeling” in China, a “revalorization” of something
    - a. A revalorization of ancestral and ethnic ties
    - b. A politics of ethnic and cultural difference within China proper
    - c. Official minorities in China begun to strongly assert their identities
    - d. And groups within the so-called Han majority have begun to rediscover, reinvent, and reassert their ethnic differences
  - 2. Especially in the south, there is a newfound interest in the southern Chu kingdom
    - a. Many museums...early Chu seen as essential to Chinese culture, said to be less important northern dynasties
    - b. Note the use of archaeology for present-day political interests (we will read about archaeology in Jerusalem)
  
- C. China’s nationalities
  - 1. There are 56 “official” nationalities, but there are nearly 350 other groups who have applied
  - 2. These latter groups are regarded as ethnically different but don’t fit into any of the official categories recognized by the state
  
- D. Gladney briefly discusses how the state created the majority “Han”
  - 1. Sun Yat-Sen saw familism and clanism but he saw no real nationalism
    - a. His project: create it
    - b. To get people to throw off the yoke of Qing empire (who were Manchu)

2. “Real” Chinese were Han, and Manchu and others were foreigners, occupiers
    - a. Sun’s scheme proposed 5 peoples of China: Han, Man (Manchu), Meng (Mongolian), Zang (Tibetan) and Hui (all Muslims, now the Uygur, Kazakh, Hui, etc.)
  3. Similar to Eriksen’s point about ethnicity always being a relationship, we see Sun’s concern to create “minorities” as part of an overall scheme to create a “majority”—a unified Chinese nation
  4. One people, one history
- E. Quite successful: got all sorts of people to think that “Chinese” and “Han” are the same