

Feb. 10, 2005

#### 4 ETHNIC IDENTITY: THE HUI

Read: Gladney 57-132

- I. Folk (non-scholarly) models of ethnicity, ethnic relatedness
  - A. *Level* of relationality determines how ethnicity is defined in actual situations
    1. I am Indian as compared to Pakistanis, Sinhalese (citizens of Sri Lanka)
    2. I am Gujarati as compared to Indians living in other regions
    3. I am Jain as compared to Hindus or Muslims
  - B. Think about: does this “level of relationality” model work for race? Gender?
  - C. Does it work for “Hui”?
    1. Gladney’s book is about the construction of an *ethnic* category, “Hui,” *at the state level*
    2. Previously it designated a religious identity
    3. Previously the Hui themselves considered only those Hui in the same region of the country to share membership
- II. Folk notions about physical relatedness
  - A. Race and ancestry
    1. In English we use the metaphor of blood to talk about descent—ties between parents and children

- a. On p. 126 a man who eats pork and who married a Han woman says his son is “100% Hui,” “my son’s blood is Hui”
    - 1) He also says that children of Hui-Han marriages are “just as Hui” as other Hui children
    - 2) Gladney said this response was unusual in the PRC (People’s Republic of China)
  - b. How would you classify this man’s son, and other offspring of “intermarried” couples? 100% Hui? 50% Hui?
    - 1) Is your notion of “blood” identical to this man’s?
2. A highly recommended video: “Rabbit-proof Fence”; rent it if you can
    - a. Based on a true story of 3 sisters in rural Australia whose father was white and mother was Aboriginal
    - b. They were forcibly taken from their maternal relatives and put in a school with other “mixed-race” children
    - c. They kept escaping and going home
    - d. This policy derived from the notion at the time that children of Aboriginals and whites (almost always the father was white) could racially “improve” if raised in white society
  3. What’s the parallel with Gladney’s example?
  4. These notions can be gendered
    - a. Interesting idea Gladney discusses, of “tainted” blood passed down from female to female
- B. A “descent-based” definition of ethnicity is quite widespread:

1. Ethnic identity is based on the idea of descent—the idea, factual or fictive, of belonging to a group of people descended from ancestors who differ from the ancestors of the “others” the group interacts with
2. This definition draws on 1) the criterion of descent, and 2) the criterion of a group’s relationship with the descendants of “other” ancestors
3. What happens if a person doesn’t affirm his or her ancestry?
  - a. Is the identity still retained? Or lost?
  - b. What if the person doesn’t know about these ancestors?
4. How do you think of an American with an Italian last name?
  - a. “Italian-American”?
  - b. Someone “of Italian descent”
  - c. What are your criteria for deciding on the label?
5. The Hui in Chendai see their otherness to be etched in stone
  - a. Records, historical artifacts, 200 pieces from gravestones, mosques, etc.
  - c. Even though these Huis’ practices toward these ancestors resemble Han ancestral worship, they are sure they are Hui, because of the records
  - b. To think about: would descendants of these ancestors still be Hui if they didn’t know their ancestry?

### III. Religion as criterion

- A. For the Hui, religion is very much tied in with their Hui-ness, but in complicated ways

1. What Gladney calls ethnoreligious
2. We see a resurgence of religion among some groups of Hui
3. Hui made a variety of Islam their own
  - a. A form of Sufism, but not connected to Sufi institutions elsewhere
4. Women's mosques are found in China, nowhere else in Muslim world
5. Think about: when can we say we have "ethnoreligious" ritual, etc., as opposed to just "religious ritual"?
6. Other evidence of Hui "ethnoreligiosity"?
  - a. Purity (*qing*)
  - b. Dietary restrictions
  - c. The "small wash" 5 times a day and "big wash" every Friday

#### IV. Religion, ethnicity and nationalism

- A. First kind: ethnic nationalism expressed in the form of a religion that opposes the state
  1. Examples?
    - a. Fundamentalists in Iraq are currently opposing the imposition of democracy—they are against establishing a secular state
  2. Hui
    - a. The modern Chinese state is anti-religion

- 1) Although not nearly so strongly as earlier<sup>1</sup>
    - b. Islam is not the traditional religion of the majority—Han Confucianism is
- B. Second kind: religion-based ethno-nationalism allied with the state
1. Iran and Islam
    - a. There are religious minorities in Iran, some of them persecuted
    - b. Jews, Baha'i
  2. Other examples of congruence of state and religion?
  3. If religious leaders constitute the government, it's called a theocracy
- C. The Hui
1. "Ethnic," cultural markers: a complicated merging with religion
  2. Certain recurring texts that are of interest to urban Hui, including legends of origin, aspects of *qing zhen* lifestyle, religious holidays, traditional specializations and handicrafts, martial arts practices, and the organization of social space
  3. Origin legends: T'ang dynasty, N.W. China
  4. Pork avoidance...how does this differ from Muslim states where no one eats pork?
  5. Hui in Fujian ancestral rites: similar to Han neighbors, but the rites are for Muslim ancestors
    - a. Can't offer them pork, although descendants eat it

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<sup>1</sup> See issues of *China's Ethnic Groups*, published quarterly by the China Association of Advanced Knowledge Promotion in Ethnic Regions, Beijing, set up "with the approval of Chinese authority."

6. Also: endogamy, surname endogamy, blood purity (varies in importance)
7. Eating a deep-fried pastry on holidays throughout China
8. Avoid even saying the word “pig”
  - a. Think about: do you know of cases where taboos on specific words serve as ethnic markers?
9. Ethnic division of labor:
  - a. Aquaculture: razor clams in Fujian.
  - b. Hui say Han are better at agriculture
    - 1) Han say the “crafty Hui” are better at trade
    - 2) Gladney’s example of Han feeling cheated by Hui in marketplaces
  - c. All of this seems very secular
  - d. But Hui say they like engaging in small business as an expression of their ethnoreligious heritage
  - e. Ancestors were traders

## V. Religion, ethnicity, nationalism, and regional variation

### A. Notions of degrees of ethnicity

1. Midwest Italians seen to be “less Italian” than New York ones
2. Doesn’t work very well with the Hui, who present a great deal of regional variation
  - a. In the south they raise pigs—Hui identity is bound up in lineage and ancestry, not on cultural maintenance

- b. Are northern Hui “more Hui” than southern? No
  - c. We find mosques in the Northwest, ancestral halls in the southeast
    - 1) But in other places restaurants serve as cultural centers
3. Is one arrangement better, “purer” than the other?

## VI. Roles played by external (non-Hui) actors

- A. China originally adopted a “trait list” model of minority nationalities derived from the Soviets
  - 1. The Chinese state didn’t recognize Quanzhou individuals as Hui until recently
  - 2. Think about: who decides who is and is not a member of an ethnic group?
    - a. Can anyone who says they’re Hui be considered to be one?
    - b. Or does a Hui community have to approve?
    - c. Or should the state decide?
- B. China had earlier established campaigns that discouraged “local nationality chauvinism,” and promoted “nationality unity”
  - 1. An emphasis on secularism; a previous repression of minorities, particularly religious ones
  - 2. Policies sought to make a clear division between religion and ethnicity
  - 3. Permit local nationality

4. The Hui contradict this—in part due to actions taken by the state itself
- C. Motivation behind these policies: afraid of powerful effect of ethnoreligious loyalties
1. So came up with the idea of creating a plurality of Turkic ethnicities
  2. Would help prevent pan-Turkic unification
- D. Shifts in state policies illustrate many of the processes
1. On Taiwan, Sun Yat-sen's policy declared 5 peoples of China (Han, Mongolian, Tibetan, Manchurian, Hui)
  2. Chiang Kai-Shek declared that all non-Han groups within China are subvarieties of an ancient Chinese race
    - a. Hui weren't a separate *minzu*, but a religious group
  3. Cultural Revolution in 1966, "10 catastrophic years," Red Guard desecrated graves, smashed Mosques, destroyed genealogies
  4. As elsewhere, expressing identity very much depends on degree of liberalism present in a country. China contrasted with Taiwan
- E. Impact on Chinese citizens: Hui, non-Hui, and in-between communities
1. Hui had to learn to accept other Hui as members of the same *minzu* (nationality minority)
  2. Hui in Fujian waited a long time for recognition: didn't fit the "trait list" criteria
    - a. But they said they assimilated to mainstream China because they were forced to—forbidden to practice Islam

- b. Forbidden to speak Arabic or Persian
- c. Familiar story of ethnic persecution

F. Advantages to being Hui

1. 1979 reforms
2. Contradictions: favorable treatment by the state of a non-Han minority
  - a. Hui prosperity with factories and restaurants due to favorable government policies
  - b. The government approved and funded 2 Islamic schools
  - c. Hui can have more children than local Han
3. Contradictions: state wants foreign exchange and so promotes Muslim tourism

“The manipulation of ethnic identity for special favored treatment has been well-documented by anthropologists and is an important factor in explaining why the Ding lineage’s ethnic identity has become even more relevant” (Gladney)

G. Non-Hui reactions to the reforms

1. Gladney says the Han don’t begrudge a pork-eating Hui’s extra allowance for beef and lamb, and extra vegetable oil, as they say it’s government money and everyone deserves what the government’s policies spell out

## VII. Discussion

- A. Bernard Cohn<sup>2</sup> suggests that granting legal statuses like the nationality minorities in China led to the objectification and, in some cases, creation, of identities—perhaps previously present but loosely defined
- B. We are uncomfortable with this kind of ethnogenesis
  - 1. Our folk model of ethnic identity sees it to be:
    - a. Permanent
    - b. Not chosen
    - c. Not political
    - d. A moral issue
- C. Who defines ethnicity?
  - 1. Them?
  - 2. Us (the ethnics)?
- D. To what purpose?

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<sup>2</sup> Bernard Cohn, 1987. The census, social structure and objectification in South Asia. In B.S. Cohn, ed., *An anthropologist among the historians and other essays*. Delhi: Oxford University Press. (cited in Gladney)