

4 ETHNIC IDENTITY III

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
4. An example from Nagel:

Thus, an American Indian might be a “mixed-blood” on the reservation, from “Pine Ridge” when speaking to someone from another reservation an “Oglala Sioux” or “Lakota” when asked about tribal affiliation, or an “American Indian” when interacting with non-Indians.” (p. 21)

B. **DISCUSS:** 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* and the consequences at the local level
2. Previously the term designated a religious identity
3. Previously the Hui themselves considered only those Hui in the same region of the country to belong to the same group
4. In the Na homestead, those Hui share an *ethnoreligious* identity
5. **DISCUSS:** any other examples of *ethnoreligious* identity you can think of?
 - a. African-American Muslims?

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—or used to; now it's "genes"
 - 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. **DISCUSS:** How would you classify this man's son, and other offspring of "intermarried" couples? 100% Hui? 50% Hui?
 - 1) What about a Hui woman marrying a Han man?
 - 2) **DISCUSS:** How does your notion of "blood"—kin relatedness—resemble this man's? Not resemble?
2. A highly recommended movie: "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
 - e. Australian government in 2008 apologized to its Aboriginal citizens, especially this "Stolen Generation"
 - f. We will see a documentary about the policy
3. **DISCUSS:** What's the parallel with Gladney's example?
4. Notions about relatedness 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
 - a. “Blood and soil” as core of ethnic identity
 - 1) Descent and territory
 - 2) Does not apply to every case
 2. The “blood” component of the definition draws on
 - a. Descent from an ancestor in common
 - b. The group’s relationship with the descendants of “other” ancestors
 - c. Who are members of other ethnic groups: remember, ethnicity is always a relationship
 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. Midwest Italians seen to be “less Italian” than New York ones
 - a. Because they don’t know enough about the region of Italy their family comes from
 5. **DISCUSS:** How do you think of an American with an Italian last name?
 - a. “Italian-American”?
 - b. Or someone “of Italian descent”
 - c. What is the difference in meaning?
 - d. What are your criteria for deciding which label?
 6. What’s the difference between
 - a. A Native American

- 1) And a person with “Indian blood”, someone “of indigenous descent”
 - b. Can you suggest methods to distinguish, to identify who belongs in which category?
7. The Hui in Chendai see their otherness to be etched in stone
- a. Records, historical artifacts, 200 pieces from gravestones, mosques, etc.
 - b. Even though these Hui’s practices toward their ancestors resemble Han ancestral worship, they are sure they are Hui, because of the records
 - c. **DISCUSS**: would descendants of these ancestors still be Hui if they didn’t know their ancestry?

III. Religion as criterion for ethnicity

- 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. For example, women’s mosques are found in China, nowhere else in Muslim world
 5. **DISCUSS**: 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 opposing the imposition of (a variety of) democracy—they are against establishing a secular state
 - 2. Immigrants to this country fleeing religious persecution
 - a. The Pilgrims, the Quakers, the Shakers
 - b. I mentioned the Anabaptists: Amish, Mennonites, Hutterites
 - 1) Their religion was pacifist, which was seen as anti-government, unpatriotic
 - 3. Hui
 - a. The modern Chinese state is anti-religion
 - 1) Although not nearly so strongly as earlier¹
 - 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: Shi'a Muslims
 - a. There are religious minorities in Iran, some of them persecuted
 - b. Jews, Baha'i, Sunni Muslims
 - 2. Ireland and Northern Ireland
 - a. Atheists may support various Catholic institutions because of the link between Catholicism, Irish history, and nationalism,
 - 2) In particular that the colonizers from England were Protestant
 - a) The “Anglo-Irish” were the aristocracy in Ireland

¹ 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.”

- b) An Anglo-Irish woman, whose family migrated in the 17th century
 - c) Talked with us about “the Irish,” clearly not identifying with them
- 3. Confucianism in China
 - a. Overseas Chinese subscribing to Confucian principles and traditions, celebrating holidays
 - b. Even overseas Chinese who are Christian
- 4. **DISCUSS:** other examples of congruence of state and religion?
- 5. If religious leaders constitute the government, it’s called a theocracy
- C. The present-day Hui
 - 1. “Ethnic” cultural markers that reveal a complicated merging with religion
 - 2. Certain recurring texts that are of interest to urban Hui,
 - a. 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. Pork avoidance
 - a. **DISCUSS:** how does this differ from Muslim states where no one eats pork?
 - b. Hui in Fujian ancestral rites: similar to their Han neighbors, but the rites are for Muslim ancestors
 - 1) Can’t offer the ancestors pork, although descendants eat it
 - c. Avoid even saying the word “pig”
 - 1) **DISCUSS:** examples of taboos on specific words serving as ethnic markers?
 - 4. Hui ethnic division of labor seems very secular:
 - a. Aquaculture: razor clams in Fujian

- b. Hui say Han are better at agriculture
 - 1) The Han say the “crafty Hui” are better at trade
 - 2) Gladney’s example of Han feeling cheated by Hui in marketplaces: “larcenous Hui”
 - c. But Hui say they like engaging in small business as an expression of their ethnoreligious heritage
 - 1) Their ancestors were traders
- D. The role played by the state
1. China originally adopted a “trait list” model of minority nationalities derived from the Soviets
 2. Earlier, China established campaigns that promoted “nationality unity” and discouraged “local nationality chauvinism”
 - a. An emphasis on secularism; a repression of minorities, particularly religious ones
 - b. Policies sought to make a clear division between religion and ethnicity
 - c. Yes there was recognition of localized nationalities
 3. Motivation behind these policies:
 - a. Afraid of powerful effect of ethnoreligious loyalties
 - b. Muslims in Western China
 - 1) State came up with the idea of creating a plurality of Turkic ethnicities
 - 2) This strategy would help prevent pan-Turkic unification
 - 3) A divide and conquer strategy
 4. Shifts in state policies
 - a. Recognition of Hui as one of the 56 *minzus* (nationality, minority)

- b. Hui had to learn to accept other Hui throughout the country as members of the same *minzu*
- c. Hui in Fujian had to wait for a long time for recognition; they didn't fit the "trait list" criteria
 - 1) But they argued that they had assimilated to mainstream China because they had been forced to—they were forbidden to practice Islam
 - 2) Forbidden to speak Arabic or Persian
- d. Present-day advantages to being Hui
 - 1) 1979 reforms
 - 2) Hui prosperity with factories and restaurants due to favorable government policies
 - 3) The government approved and funded 2 Islamic schools
 - 4) Hui can have more children than local Han
- e. Why?
 - 1) Chinese state wants foreign exchange and so promotes Muslim tourism

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

21A.226 Ethnic and National Identity
Fall 2011

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.