

Sept. 16, 2009

### 3 ETHNIC IDENTITY II

Read: Gladney 25-54

Nagel: 19-33

#### **Difficult words encountered in reading:**

Cadre: authorized organizers in a political party or state agency

Madrassah: Islamic school

Ethnonym: name of an ethnos/ethnic group

Sufism: an Islamic movement, adherents located in numerous countries

Acculturation: movement toward the dominant culture

Pogrom: campaign of extermination of local members of an ethnic group, usually referring to European Jews

Hegemonic: will be discussed in the course—pertains to power

- I. Ethnicity: what is it and how do we analyze it?
  - A. Review: We've established that:
    1. Ethnicity is best seen in terms of relationship
    2. Ethnicity has to do with classification of groups of humans
  - B. Today we'll consider ethnicity seen as a *process*
    1. Nagel introduces lots of terms related to seeing ethnicity in this way
  - C. The benefits of this approach:
    1. History is brought back in
    2. Change is allowed in the analysis
    3. People aren't seen as objects—as "Xs" throughout time
      - a. Ethnicity *is* about classifications of humans, but there's a lot more to it than that
      - b. The classifications are dynamic—their meaning changes
        - 1) The populations that the terms refer to change

- 2) As does the authoritative individual or institution that determines which classifications are the correct, authoritative ones

II. Two perspectives can be taken:

- A. First perspective: analyze the position of an individual
  1. Nagel's point that ethnic identity lies at the intersection of individual ethnic self-definition (who I am) and collective ethnic attribution (who they say I am)
    - a. A dialectic between internal identification and external ascription
- B. Second perspective involves analyzing the group as a whole—from its point of view and from an external point of view
  1. Ethnic identity in this perspective lies at the intersection of ethnic group self-definition (who we say we are) and non-group ethnic attribution (who they say we are)
- C. Notice the different thrusts of the 2 authors we read for today with respect to this point
  1. Nagel's perspective is more individualistic than Gladney's
- D. Hui case suggests we need a third perspective
  1. One that analyzes the state itself
  2. And investigates its formulations of ethnic policies, its rationales for them, the history, etc.
    - a. And then analyzes why in many cases the state doesn't subscribe to its own policies/formulations
    - b. Bureaucracies are never completely rational, coherent, internally logical
      - 1) They have histories, cultures, power dynamics
  3. The state was not using its own criteria when it classified the Hui into a single ethnic group—and this is not a small matter
    - a. The Hui were included in the group of nationalities (minorities) initially recognized by the state

- b. **REVIEW:** ways the Hui do not fit into the 4 Stalinist criteria for a minority
- 4. Gladney shows the ways that state policies lie behind why the Hui are so difficult to define as an ethnic group
- 5. The state created, invented the category (came up with a legal definition of who and who is not a member)
- 6. Then lumped all Muslims not belonging to the 10 recognized Muslim nationalities into one “nationality”
- 7. “Hui” became basically a default term for groups of Muslims who do not have a language of their own
- 8. We have here a good example of ethnicity as a PROCESS

### III. Six ways to analyze ethnic processes

#### A. First: evolutionary perspective

- 1. Sees ethnic groups to be from a pre-modern time
- 2. Sees ethnicity to be a kind of vestigial feature characteristic of more traditional societies
- 3. In mid-century U.S. everyone saw ethnicity as incompatible with modernity
- 4. Both the political Right (who subscribed to assimilationist models) and Left (who employed class models) predicted its disappearance
  - a. The Right saw ethnic groups as eventually joining the mainstream society—in US, Canada, Europe
    - 1) The melting pot idea
  - b. The Left saw class solidarity eventually replacing ethnic identification and loyalties
- 5. Clearly, this perspective doesn’t work, never did
- 6. Won’t explain the Hui, the Han, not, even, Native American peoples

7. Cannot answer the question of why there has been such a strong ethnic resurgence in the U.S. and Europe, China—and many other places
  8. Clearly we cannot analyze ethnicity as only a matter of blood (ancestry) and soil (territory)
    - a. It's often characterized this way, and with justification
    - b. But there's always more to it
- B. The second approach: Adaptation
1. Sees ethnic change as processes of adaptation
  2. The Hui provide examples
    - a. They adapted the Chinese language
      - 1) For example, Gladney's discussion of etymology (origins) of the 2 Chinese terms for "pure" and "truth"
    - b. Adapt their Islamic beliefs and practices to Confucianism
    - c. Include Buddhist architectural features in their mosques
    - d. **DISCUSS:** other examples of Hui adaptation?
- C. Third approach: ethnicity seen as performance
1. A language can serve as emblem of ethnic membership, and speaking it permits enactments of ethnic identity
    - a. The Hui's use of the terms "pure and true" is an example
      - 1) These words help the Hui *perform*, instantiate, their identity
      - 2) These words stand as symbols, emblems that communicate ethnic membership to insiders and outsiders alike
    - b. Gladney's example of Hui market men recognizing one another by listening to their speech
      - 1) Using Arabic or Persian numbers to decide among themselves what the price will be, then announcing it to Han buyers

- c. **DISCUSS:** ways your speech serves to mark your various identities
  - 1) In what contexts? What kinds of people have to be present for you to “perform” in this way?
- 2. Ritual behavior can be seen as a kind of *language* that serves as an emblem of, and a method for, enacting, performing, ethnic and religious identity
  - a. **DISCUSS:** examples of Hui ritual that do this?
  - b. Dietary restrictions; ritual bathing
  - c. Gladney’s example of the man who refused to drink from a cup of tea Gladney offered because it might still be contaminated from a pork eater’s use
  - d. This man was a Communist, self-avowed atheist—although he went to mosque services
  - e. **DISCUSS:** “a basic powerfulness, even horror, related to defilement and impurity” (p. 28)
- D. Fourth: ethnicity as dialectic
  - 1. Gladney’s point that after 30 years of being seen by the state simply as Hui
  - 2. The Bai, the Tibetans, the Hainanese Muslims, Cantonese, Shanghainese, Fujianese non-Mandarin speakers themselves claim membership in the same Hui ethnic group as other Hui in China
    - a. Despite linguistic diversity and multicultural background
  - 3. This is called *ethnogenesis*:
    - a. The birth of, the origin of, a new form of ethnic identity; or, in a weaker sense (Nagel), cultural revival
    - b. Prior to state recognition, the Hui recognized one another as fellow Muslims
      - 1) But not as members of the same *minzu* (nationality)

- 2) Earlier, their ethnic consciousness was localized, it was not China-wide
- c. State recognition brought all Hui closer together
  - 1) Through dialogue with state policy and local traditions
  - 2) Examples: “pan-Hui” interaction, and mandatory Hui schools
- 4. We have a *dialectical* relationship here
  - a. Gladney’s point about the Han looking down on Hui as dirty, immoral
  - b. Whereas the Hui look down on Han because the Hui see themselves as more pure and true
  - c. The same thing happens with Gypsies, also known as Roma (self-name)
    - 1) Are often considered dirty by mainstream society
    - 2) But Roma consider themselves purer and cleaner than non-Roma
      - a) Ways of seeing the body as polluting, rituals of purification that non-Roma don’t perform—so non-Roma are dirty
- E. The fifth perspective: ethnicity seen as choice
  - 1. Nagel’s discussion of multilayered ethnicity
    - a. This analytic perspective counteracts the “thingness” of most notions of ethnic groups
    - b. An Indian. A Jew. A Chinese person. Latinos, Hispanics...African Americans...Asians...
    - c. While these ascriptions are real, they may serve to definitively categorize an individual, a group, only from the distant outside
    - d. This “thingness” invariably dissolves the closer we get—multiple identities, layers of identity components

2. Nagel's notion of ethnic choice refers to an individual choosing to keep or discard an ethnicity
  - a. This feature, operating over time, explains the varying rates of official membership for Native Americans
3. She makes a distinction between rational choice and nonrational choice
  - a. I don't care for this characterization
    - 1) This terminology comes from a subfield of political science called Rational Choice Theory
  - b. It sets up an either/or, and ranked opposition, whereas in fact such choices are often a little of both<sup>1</sup>
  - c. "Nonrational" is a put-down kind of word
    - 1) Implies that "rational" is a good strategy, understandable, the correct choice because it serves the individual's interests
    - 2) And implies that "nonrational" is due to other reasons—emotion influencing the choice, for example
4. The *idea* she discusses is OK: choosing an identity based on a perceived advantage in the form of some kind of material or power gain is "rational"
  - a. As opposed to some other kind of motive having to do with symbolic meaning, feelings, sociability, recreational, etc.
  - b. Lots of the multiculturalist activities so popular today are motivated more by emotions than perceived material gain—but emotions serving as motives are not examples of "nonrational" in the sense of "irrational"
  - c. Ethnic symbols can elicit powerful emotional responses
  - d. People attend ethnic festivals, take classes in a Celtic language, etc., for these reasons—feeling emotions is not "irrational"
5. So the notion of instrumentalist motives is useful

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<sup>1</sup> See Sonia Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino, Arturo Escobar, 1998. Introduction: The cultural and the political in Latin American social movements. In Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar, eds., *Cultures of politics, politics of Cultures: Re-visioning Latin American social movements*. Boulder: Westview: 1-32.

- a. It explains some of the movement by people into and out of ethnic categories
  - b. But only some of it
6. There are many examples of challenges to identity choices and the claims based on those self-identifications
- a. University committees deciding which minorities are underrepresented—it happens here
  - b. Often the challenge is based on assumptions that a person or group has chosen to claim an ethnic identity because of perceived gains to be made in so doing
  - c. **DISCUSS:** some examples?
  - d. We will read an article by de la Cadena discussing how Quechua women in Peru are said to be “more Indian,” more purely Indian than Quechua men
    - 1) **DISCUSS:** other examples distinguishing degree of belonging by gender?
- F. The sixth perspective analyzes ethnicity as non-choice: a classification ascribed by the mainstream society
- 1. We have returned to the state and its interests
    - a. Examples of state concern about ethnicity:
      - 1) Census
      - 2) Security to the point of internment—we’ll see a video about U.S. internment of Japanese and Japanese-American citizens during WW II
      - 3) Security and economic protectionism: immigration policies
      - 4) Using ethnicity to determining political access and eligibility
      - 5) **DISCUSS:** examples in the U.S.? Other countries?
  - 2. The state and other authorities (e.g., religious institutions) may place external limits on choice

- a. **DISCUSS:** examples?
  - b. The Hui are an example
  - c. African Americans
  - d. Ethnic ghettos
  - e. Ethnic cleansing (deportation, forced displacement)
  - f. Killing, pogroms
  - g. Required ethnic markers
    - 1) Yellow star of David
    - 2) Stamping an identity card
3. The ethnic group itself might place internal limits on choice (e.g., options for behavior)
- a. Don't be a traitor to your group
    - 1) **DISCUSS:** examples you can think of?
    - 2) Don't be a sell-out
    - 3) Don't be a "self-hating Jew"
    - 4) Films by Spike Lee?
  - b. Such pressures can be strong, to the point of put someone in danger in times of great conflict

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