Negotiating Ethnicities in China and Taiwan

EDITED BY
Melissa J. Brown

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Contents

Foreword

In the fall of 1993 I issued an international call for papers for a symposium on Chinese identities, sponsored by Berkeley's Center for Chinese Studies, which I then chaired. Although I suggested a dozen or so possible areas to explore, I deliberately chose as vague a subject title as I could, hoping to see how the China studies community would interpret it. We received dozens of paper proposals spanning time, space, and social categories. The two-day symposium, convened February 25–26, 1994, in Berkeley, ended up with twenty-seven papers, one video, and a stimulating keynote speech by Professor Tu Wei-ming ("Cultural China: Embodied Knowledge and an Imagined Community"). The panels addressed the following topics: "Women's Identities"; "Names and Narratives, Order and Ritual: Identities in Early China"; "Religious and Ritual Identities"; "Producing Identities: Negotiations across Borders and Boundaries"; and "Regional Identities." Presenters came from a gratifyingly wide range of disciplines and utilized a spectrum of methodologies. The panels themselves contained a great deal of diversity. For instance, subjects addressed in the "Women's Identities" panel ranged from women ghosts in Yuan drama to May Fourth–era women writers to feminism with Chinese characteristics in the contemporary period.

The book you hold in your hand grew out of the "Producing Ethnicities" panel, which was organized by Melissa Brown. She brought together seven of her fellow dissertation-writing Ph.D. candidates from the University of Washington, along with their mentor, Stevan Harrell. In order not to overload the panel, Professor Harrell did not present a paper; rather, he gave a masterful oral state of the field, prefaced by the caveat that despite a striking physical resemblance, he was not Michel Foucault (whose ghost certainly hovered over the symposium). The panel was superb and testified to the truly exciting work on the Chinese world being done by anthropologists, a significant number of whom appear to

be based in Seattle. Panel members included two members of what are designated "national minorities" in China, as well as a mainland-originating scholar researching Taiwan. Melissa Brown took the initiative in collecting the revised papers from her panel and soliciting four others. Professor Keng-fong Pang actually presented a different paper at the symposium, a wonderful exploration of Hainan's international coconut festival, which I certainly hope finds its way into print.

I think readers will agree that these stimulating papers illustrate with a great deal of original primary evidence the way in which "identities" of all sorts, not just "ethnic," are created and subsequently reproduced through interaction within the specific group and with Others, including academic observers. I hope that this work attracts attention outside the China field, so that scholars within our community (imagined?) can contribute to the larger body of knowledge on this important and unfortunately explosive (viz., the former Yugoslavia as a tragic case) subject.

THOMAS B. GOLD

Preface

In the fall of 1993, Steve Harrell gave me a call for papers on "Chinese 'identities'" for the 1994 Annual Symposium of the Center for Chinese Studies (CCS) at the University of California, Berkeley. I saw it as the perfect opportunity to raise some of the issues that my fellow graduate students in China anthropology and I had been tossing around in more casual settings at the University of Washington. Each of us had come back from field-work projects with empirical evidence that ethnic identities, or ethnicities, are actively produced on every social level in relation to such contexts as gender, culture, and geographic region, not passively maintained at the local level in some "authentic" and immutable whole. The CCS symposium provided us the oppor-tunity to present ethnographic evidence for the contestable and porous nature of borders and boundaries. Our goal was to do more than simply explore the constraints that limit negotiations and the advantages won through negotiation at the local level; we wanted to raise for discussion the theoretical implications that our data have for clearly bounded notions of "Chinese society" and "identity."

The essays assembled in this volume came out of that CCS symposium. Six of the authors—Borchigud, Brown, Cheung, Khan, Ren, and Upton—presented papers on the University of Washington panel. Two more—Ebrey and Pang—presented papers on other panels. The essays presented here are elabora-tions of those symposium papers, except for Pang's essay, which is new. Her presentation of multiple identities, including a trans-national one, adds to the range of issues raised here. The essays by Harrell and Chao, who also attended the symposium, bring further breadth to our consideration of negotiating ethnicities. The wide range of theoretical, ethnographic, and historical per-spectives united in this volume shows the rich variation and com-plexity in people's construction of their identities and their place(s) in society in different Chinese contexts.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to acknowledge the con-tributions that have made this volume possible. Tom Gold and

the Center for Chinese Studies provided the forum and the funds. Tom Gold has also been kind enough to write the foreword. Jane Turbiner and other CCS staff members efficiently coordinated the symposium. Steve Harrell served as panel moderator, provided a wide range of advice, and wrote the introduction in addition to contributing an essay. Tani Barlow and John Shepherd agreed to serve as discussants for the University of Washington panel. Ralph Litzinger contributed greatly to that panel, and I regret that other commitments did not allow him to include his essay in this volume. Tamara Hamlish offered me particularly helpful advice on coordinating and focusing a large panel. Elaine DuRall, Shirley Sotter, and Tim Hunt of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Washington all gave technical support at crucial times, and I appreciate the assistance. Finally, but certainly not least, Joanne Sandstrom at the Institute of East Asian Studies has provided skillful editing and more. I will always be grateful for her patient guidance through my first experience as the editor of a volume.

Introduction

STEVAN HARRELL

The essays in this book speak to anyone who would like to question the idea that the existence of China has been inevitable for a very long time, or is puzzled about why there is no immediate solution to the issue of Tibetan independence, or would like to know why the study of minority peoples—only 8 percent of the People's Republic and only 1.5 percent of Taiwan—can tell us important things about the history and the present of China as a whole. They also speak to anyone who revels intellectually in the complexity and potentiality of social relations in the real world. The essays, by nine anthropologists and a social historian, all address related facets of the shifting and fluid process of negotiation that is the real nature of ethnic relations in China, past and present, and by extension in the rest of the world also.

The Negotiated Nature of Ethnic Identity

In the last few years of the twentieth century, the world seems consumed with the politics of identity. Contention among groups for economic and political resources captures an enormous amount of attention in the world press, as more and more boundaries are drawn and solidified. The Balkans are once again Balkanized, with Bosnia splitting into three (or is it two?) republics, Macedonia standing by itself but provoking Greek resentment because of its name, and Albanians nursing grievances in Kosovo, the reputed cradle of Serbianity. Armenians fight to the death over Karabakh where, they tell us, there were no Turks (Azeris) at all until the eighteenth century. Kurds struggle unsuccessfully for independence from Iraq, Iran, and Turkey, but at least attain the consolation prize of recognition in the world press as a "nationality." Quebec may or may not secede from Canada, but it is at least recognized as a "unique society" with a separate culture, and

actually outlaws non-French-language signs. In the United States, ethnic consciousness is variously promoted and derided as a source of pride and a source of conflict, while self-appointed representatives of ethnic and racial groups contend over the results of the last census and the categories to be employed in the next one. In Europe, on the other hand, boundaries are softening. German troops are cheered as they take part in a Bastille Day parade on the Champs Élysées; Catalonia, with no opposition from Madrid, advertises itself in the world press as "a country in Spain with its own language, history, and traditions"; and even in England, now joined to the Continent by the Chunnel, people begin to think of themselves as Europeans.

We see the actors in this drama-cycle of Mahabharatian complexity as members of collectivities—nations and ethnic groups. An ethnic group can be defined as a group of people that shares a putative common origin through descent and a putative commonality of cultural features such as language, food, clothing, and customs that distinguish it from other ethnic groups (Keyes 1981; Nagata 1981; Harrell 1990). Some ethnic groups are also nations, possessing in addition to a common origin and culture the claim to state sovereignty. The relationship of a nation to its own ethnic parts can take various forms: it can be mono-ethnic (such as Korea or Denmark); it can have a single, dominant ethnic group but preserve a varying number of rights for minorities (as in Turkey, Japan, or Malaysia); or it can be ideologically poly-ethnic, with equal rights theoretically granted to members of all ethnic groups, as in the cases of the United States, China, Singapore, Tanzania, or Belgium. Similarly, an ethnic group can be nearly coterminous with a nation (though it always allows for the possibility of emigration) as in Japan or Poland; it can be one of several groups making up a nation, as Bretons in France or Navajos in the United States; or it can spread across several countries, as do Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, or Basques in France and Spain.

In the Western press, and in the ideologies of most states in the contemporary world, including the People's Republic of China, this complex patchwork of relations among nations and ethnic groups is seen as a struggle over resources among groups already in existence. For example, the current Bosnian war is often portrayed as a situation in which members of disparate ethnic groups Serbian, Croatian, and Muslim—lived side by side in peace, interacting and intermarrying, as long as the retrospectively benevolent hand of Tito's dictatorship cradled them firmly, but

ONE

Surnames and Han Chinese Identity

PATRICIA EBREY

Despite enormous geographical diversity and mutually incomprehensible dialects or languages, today more than a billion people consider themselves to be Han Chinese. This situation makes Han Chinese ethnic identity one of the wonders of world history. Whereas Western Europe and the Americas together are home to almost as many people, they divide themselves into several dozen countries and even more ethnic groups. What has made China different? What has made it possible for Han Chinese to imagine such an enormous agglomeration of people as sharing something important, something that makes it possible, even desirable, to live together in a single state? No one would deny that Han Chinese had multiple identities, or that many situations left room for manipulation and negotiation, for choice concerning which identity or identities to assert. But the Han Chinese layer of identity has been and continues to be important in social and political life. In this essay I examine the connection between Chinese surnames and Han Chinese identity.[1] I contend that Chinese understandings of ethnic identity have differed in important ways from ones found elsewhere—ones based on language, race, or place—and that their distinctive features help account for the huge size of the Han ethnic group.

Conventional wisdom has it that the secret to Chinese identity and cohesion was Confucian "culturalism" or universalism, bases for identity fundamentally different from nationalism, racism, and

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[1] Throughout this essay I use the term "Han identity" in its modern sense. In premodern times, the vocabulary used to refer to what is now labeled "Han" ethnicity was much more complicated, with other terms (especially "Hua" and "Xia") more common in many periods, and no term at all needed in many contexts. For a good discussion of the historical evolution of the use of "Han" as an ethnic term, see Chen 1986.

TWO

On Becoming Chinese

MELISSA J. BROWN

Owen Lattimore (1962, 477) distinguishes China's northern and southern frontiers as a "frontier of exclusion" and "a frontier of inclusion" respectively. He points out that traditionally the Chinese set out to demarcate the northern frontier as a border and to defend it from northern "barbarians," goals impressively demonstrated by the existence of the Great Wall. Conversely, the Chinese pushed the southern frontier with migration, appropriating the land and either appropriating the peoples on that land through assimilation or forcing them to retreat to higher altitudes (Lattimore 1962, 476). To appreciate how much land and how many people have been appropriated over the centuries, one only need realize that at one time the southern frontier began at the Yangtze River (Knapp 1980, xi). This essay discusses how, on one part of this southern frontier in southwestern Taiwan, descendants of some of Taiwan's Aboriginal peoples crossed the boundary separating Chinese from Aborigines.

Historically, Taiwan's Aboriginal peoples have been categorized by Chinese not according to their own classifications or even

THREE

Taiwan and the Impossibility of the Chinese

HAI REN

In the summer of 1993, I conducted fieldwork in Taiwan. In various situations, I was associated with more than a dozen identifications, including a representative of China, a Han, a mainlander, a Sichuanese, a scholar, a student of the University of Washington, a "hijacker," and an "illegal immigrant." These identifications reflect Taiwanese identities no less than my own identities. My experience of being classified in Taiwan has much to do with Taiwanese "distorted" communication with the "unknown" Other (i.e., China). I myself was narrated as "the Other" in Taiwanese experiences of identity formation.[1]

Here, by analyzing four fragmentary strategies—staying at home, traveling to ancestral places on the mainland, recollecting the past, and permanently fixing certain events or figures in history through monumentation—I will examine the difficulties inherent in representing "the Chinese."[2] A major goal of this essay is to disorient attempts to assert the authority of representing "the

[1] The dichotomy between the researcher as Self and the informants as Other has become very unstable; it often collapsed and was displaced in my ethnographic fieldwork.

[2] My usage of such terms as "the Chinese," "the Han," "the Taiwanese" in this essay will not be "clearly" defined. I recognize my own representation of "the Chinese" as a necessary failure. For a critique of the problems of my representation of the Chinese in this essay, see Ren (n.d.). "Travel" in this essay refers to both the action and the anxiety of border crossing. Travel is about symbolic shift as well as spatial movement.

FOUR

Home on the Grasslands? Tradition, Modernity, and the Negotiation of Identity by Tibetan Intellectuals in the PRC

JANET L. UPTON

The grasslands of the Sino-Tibetan borderlands provide a fertile field for national imaginings. Important historically as a zone of transition—geographical, cultural, and political—the grasslands of northwestern Sichuan were traditionally difficult to control from both Beijing and Lhasa (see Sperling 1993), the very marginality of the borderlands thus marking them as an area of central concern in the imperial visions of both political centers.[1] But the central marginality and marginal centrality of the Sichuan grasslands does not lie only in the distant reaches of a remote imperial past. As the site of one of the most difficult stretches of the Long March, immortalized in many accounts of that pivotal event in modern Chinese history, the grasslands of northwest Sichuan have, in the twentieth century, come to represent not only the ultimate in desolation and backwardness, but also a site of

[1] For a discussion of margins as centers and centers as margins, see Bhabha (1990).

Who Are the Mongols? State, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Representation in the PRC

ALMAZ KHAN

Many recent anthropological studies on ethnicities of China have been focused on problems of the official *minzu* identification project whereby apparently different ethnic groups have been lumped together under one minzu in a way that does not seem to make scientific sense.[1] One aftermath of such arbitrary state identification has been the contestation and resistance carried out by groups who reject the classification imposed on them and work toward recognition as a separate minzu.[2] In our effort to highlight cases of problematic state identifications (which is highly needed and valuable), however, we may have paid less than sufficient attention to identity processes among groups that are recognized as having well-established, "clear-cut" minzu statuses accepted both by themselves and by the Chinese state. Such groups include, among others, the Tibetans, Mongols, Manchus, Uighurs, Koreans, and even the Han Chinese.[3] There also seems to have

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I would like to thank Stevan Harrell, Jonathon Lipman, Kevin Stuart, U. E. Bulag, and Melissa Brown for their editorial comments.

[1] There is no English equivalent for "minzu," which has several usages. For example, it can mean "ethnic" in the Western sense of the word or "nationality," as in *Falanxi minzu* (French nationality). Also, a minzu in reality can contain several different ethnic groups in the Western sense of the concept (see Harrell 1990, 552). Lastly, a group cannot be a minzu if not recognized by the state. Thus, I shall use the Chinese term *minzu* when talking about problems of ethnicity in the context of China.

[2] This important focus has produced a body of impressive literature in the past few years. See, e.g., Harrell (1990, 1995a, 1995b), Gladney (1991, 1994), and Cheung (this volume). The issue explored in these works is who belongs to which category rather than the problem examined in this essay: who represents whom. For another recent study on ethnic representations in China, see Litzinger (1994).

[3] See, for example, Crossley (1990) and Duara (1993).

SIX

Transgressing Ethnic and National Boundaries: Contemporary "Inner Mongolian" Identities in China

WURLIG BORCHIGUD

What is "Chinese identity?" Is it a national identity? A cultural identity? Or an ethnic identity? In the People's Republic of China, the Chinese state claims that the notion of "Chinese identity"—*Zhonghua minzu* or *Zhongguo ren*—includes peoples from all ethnic groups living in the territory of China. However, when the same Chinese terms with the same English translation are used by peoples of Taiwan and Hong Kong and by peoples of Han Chinese origin in different countries, the terms are mostly considered to be a cultural or an ethnic identity across the Chinese national boundary. In contemporary Western and Chinese academies, interpretations and debates about "Chinese identity" refer only to the *Han minzu* or *Han ren* (i.e., people living in China who belong to the Han ethnic group or people outside China who have a Han ethnic origin). At the same time, Western scholars who specialize in non-Han ethnic peoples in China avoid using the English word "Chinese" to identify their study subjects because this word can be easily mistaken to mean Han ethnic identity.

Being Hui, Huan-nang, and Utsat Simultaneously: Contextualizing History and Identities of the Austronesian-speaking Hainan Muslims

KENG-FONG PANG

In recent years, studies of minority communities in the People's Republic of China have revealed an exciting diversity of minority experiences and perspectives. Many of these studies are by anthropologists who have learned the languages of the minorities in their research and who usually strive to conduct their fieldwork using indigenous languages as well as the regional version of Mandarin. This essay examines some of the interesting consequences of using multiple indigenous languages in fieldwork on Hainan Island.[1] It analyzes the different types of anthropological

[1] In Malaysia, I was formally educated bilingually in Malay and English, but I also speak Mandarin, Cantonese, and Chaozhou, as well as my mother-tongue, Hainanese. I learned Tsat as a field language. My linguistic resources meant that,

Hegemony, Agency, and Re-presenting the Past:

The Invention of Dongba Culture among the Naxi of Southwest China

EMILY CHAO

This essay addresses the promotion and politics of ethnic representation in post-Mao-era China. I suggest that a local project of empowerment stressing ethnic authenticity—the identification of "*dongba* culture" as central to the official representation of the Naxi minority—was engendered by the state project to re-imagine the nation. I argue that the legitimization of dongba culture has required the sanitization and secularization of the indigenous dongba religion for the purpose of re-presenting the Naxi as a learned, civilized, and advanced minority. This process co-incided with the definition of two spaces of authenticity, which entailed the symbolic partitioning off of Naxi women and mountain people as representatives of "difference." I argue that constructions of authenticity in the present are informed by notions of difference rooted in a discourse of imperial expansion. An examination of the invention of dongba culture reveals how the workings of local agency and state hegemony are inseparable.

About 250,000 Naxi live in Yunnan Province; they are one of fifty-five state-designated *shaoshu minzu* (minority nationalities). The Naxi reside primarily in the Lijiang Naxi Autonomous

NINE

Representation and Negotiation of Ge Identities in Southeast Guizhou

SIU-WOO CHEUNG

The state project of *minzu shibie,* or "ethnic identification," fol-
lowing the translation by Fei Xiaotong (1981, 60), the project's
chief architect, was to implement a monolithic grid of finite and
nonoverlapping categories upon the diverse peoples who
identified themselves differently from the "Han" Chinese in the
People's Republic of China.[1] When the project began in the early
1950s, more than four hundred categories of local groups were
submitted for approval. By the mid-1960s, most of them had been
classified into fifty-five *minzu* (nationality) categories, including
the majority Han. The minzu institution, largely demolished dur-
ing the Cultural Revolution, was resurrected in the late 1970s, and
the number of minzu categories was increased to fifty-six by the
addition of one more group. At the same time, many cases of
undetermined and contested categories resurfaced. The Ge in
southeast Guizhou Province was one of them.

   [1] The category "Han" in the state project of classification might be different from
its general usage referring vaguely to the "Chinese" in political import or boun-
daries. Please refer to the essays in this volume by Wurlig Borchigud, Melissa
Brown, Patricia Ebrey, and Ren Hai for discussion on the boundary of Chinese
identities.

The Nationalities Question and the Prmi Prblem

STEVAN HARRELL

This essay takes up the general problem of the relationship between local ethnic identity and ethnic interaction on the one hand and state categories of ethnic or nationalities classification on the other. I assert here that local identity is, more than anything else, fluid. It is composed of overlapping potential groups or categories tied together by different kinds of ties of commonality. State classifications, by contrast, are rigid, boxing every person into one and only one of a set of nonoverlapping groups. Both kinds of identity are negotiated: local ethnic identity is negotiated continuously; state ethnic classification is negotiated only during periods of classification or change.

The Conceptual Problem

I have argued elsewhere (Harrell 1990) that ethnic consciousness and identity arise in a three-way interplay between a group that considers itself distinctive, neighboring groups from which the group distinguishes itself, and the state, which establishes official categories of group identification and distributes benefits to the groups so identified. (The state, of course, does not lie completely outside the ethnic group, since some members of the ethnic group in most circumstances will also be agents of the state.) In this kind of situation, local identities, which concern primarily distinctions and relationships among groups, interact with state-determined distinctions, which determine relationships between groups and the state and also influence local relations among groups. In arguing for this three-way model, I have pointed out that the observations of Brackette Williams in the 1989 *Annual Review of Anthropology*, while serving as a needed corrective to

Character List

Entries, unless otherwise noted, are in standard Mandarin Chinese. Entries in Taiwanese are indicated by (T); entries in Hainanese are indicated by (H); entries in Japanese are indicatedby (J). Terms taken from pre-1949 historical sources or from Taiwan sources, indicated by (f), use full-form characters. Terms from P.R.C. sources, indicated by (s), use simplified or full-form characters as used in the P.R.C.

Aba Zangzu Qiangzu Zizhizhou (s)　阿坎藏族羌族自治州
Alizu (f)　阿立祖
Ba (surname) (f)　巴
Ba, Fan, Shen, Xiang, Zheng (f)　巴樊暉相鄭
Bai (ethnic group) (s)　白
baijiu (s)　白酒
Bailang [Ge] (s)　白狼歌
Baima (ethnic group) (s)　白马
ban nong ban mu (s)　半农半牧
Baotou (s)　包头
Beidu yehuling, denggao nanwang,　北渡野狐岭，登高南望，
　　fushi taihang zhu shan, qinglang ke'ai;　俯視太行諸山，晴朗可愛；
　　beigu dan hanyan shuaicao,　北顧但寒尖煙衰草，
　　zhongyuan zhifeng, zhici ge jue yi! (f)　中原之風，至此隔絕矣！
ben minzu tuanjie (s)　本民族团结
caoyuan (s)　草原
Caoyuan chenqu (s)　草原晨曲
Caoyuan fenghuo (s)　草原峰火
Caoyuan shangde renmen (s)　草原上的人们
Caoyuan yingxiong xiaojiemei (s)　草原英雄小姐妹
Changyi (f)　昌意
Chen (f)　陳

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