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East Asia

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Introduction

East Asia is a problematic category. Conventionally understood to encompass China, Japan, and Korea – more than 11 million square kilometers and more than 1.5 billion people, or less than a tenth of the earth's landmass, but over a fifth of the global population – its putative unity lies in China's longtime dominance: a shared ideology, Confucianism; a shared written language, Classical Chinese; and a shared politics, an imperial tributary system. But such a conception would also include Vietnam, partially ruled by Chinese dynasties until 939 CE, as well as Mongolia, which became only decisively detached from China in the early twentieth century. Although the Sinocentric worldview was largely accepted by Koreans for several centuries until the late nineteenth century, it registered ambivalence and intermittent resistance by Japanese for the better part of the past two thousand years (Dreyer 2016). Sinocentrism, in any case, encompassed the entire world; the idea of East Asia is a belated category that became widespread only in the twentieth century (Lie 2018).

   The recent recognition of modern, largely Western, categories of nation, ethnicity, race, and peoplehood spawned a new reckoning of the region and its people in East Asia from the latter half of the nineteenth century. What had been political–civilizational ideas of China, Japan, and Korea transformed into modern notions of nations and peoples. Until the intrusion of Western ideas and powers, each polity harbored no illusions of being one nation, one people. Symptomatically, many founders of Chinese dynasties were not ethnically Chinese; no one thought to write a history of China until Liang Qichao did so in 1901 when he remarked: "What is most embarrassing for us is that our country does not have a name," being referred to by one or another dynastic name (Lie 2018). Each polity was undergirded by a rigid status hierarchy that had held the region's peoples together for the preceding two or three centuries. The Qing empire (1644–1911) revolved around a Manchu

emperorship that bound together the diverse idealized and rhetorically constructed constituencies that had been gradually acquired by the ruling imperial elite (Crossley 2000). Chosŏn Korea (1392–1910) centered on a Confucian monarchy presiding over a highly stratified society that saw landlords as almost racially distinct from the rest of the people (Shin 2006). Japanese under the Tokugawa Shogunate (1600–1868) witnessed a peculiar bifurcation between an emperor who reigned and a shōgun (overlord) who ruled and presided over a feudal elite served by a samurai class, all of whom saw themselves superior to the masses (Lie 2001). In short, the rulers and the ruled did not constitute one people. Not surprisingly, nothing like the modern Western notion of nationalism flourished.

In the First Opium War (1839–1842) with Great Britain, China was the first to suffer directly from the increasingly assertive European presence in East Asia. Japan, a much smaller economy and thus less tantalizing prize, was spared the initial thrust of the European thirst for trade, and so it had a chance to adjust to the new imperialist global situation as it too was being forced to open its ports (Beasely 1989). Beginning in the 1850s and especially after the Meiji Restoration (1868), Japan was in the vanguard of seeking a Western-style modernity, and it became the conduit through which Western ideas flowed to the other polities of East Asia. Japan's influence was not limited to ideas and institutions. Its subsequent military expansion into Korea, beginning in the 1870s and leading to outright annexation in 1910, Taiwan after the First Sino-Japanese War (1895), Manchuria in the 1930s, and the rest of East and Southeast Asia in the late 1930s and early 1940s, has heavily colored the politics of race, ethnicity, and nationalism in East Asia through the remainder of the twentieth century and into the present.

Japan

Edwin O. Reischauer (1988:33), one of the foremost scholars of Japan, confidently declared in a 1988 book that "the Japanese today are the most thoroughly unified and culturally homogeneous large bloc of people in the world." In so saying, he was reflecting the dominant discourse of his day, which had arisen after Japan's defeat in World War II. But starting in the mid-1980s, recognition of Japan's ethnic diversity has steadily increased as a result of minority activism, growth in migration from other parts of Asia, and the return of diasporic Japanese from Brazil, Peru, and elsewhere. Sandwiched between the end of an explicitly multiethnic Japanese empire and a rising awareness of the diversity of the postwar Japanese nation, this monoethnic moment occurred in reaction to the collapse of empire and the emergence of a US-authored democratic system. Beginning in the 1960s, this discourse of national homogeneity arose concurrently with Japan's postwar recovery and its reemergence on the world stage symbolized by the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and the 1968 centennial celebrations of the Meiji Restoration.

It was in this time that the idea of Japanese monoethnicity began to manifest itself in *Nihonjinron,* the discourse of Japanese distinctiveness, whose main features had coalesced by the late 1960s: the Japanese orientation towards collectivism, as opposed to Western (principally US) individualism; the uniqueness of the Japanese language (although how it might be more unique than any other language was left

unelaborated); the nonverbal and supralogical nature of the Japanese communication style, as opposed to Western logical argumentation; and the homogeneous composition of Japanese society, which was linked to the democratic nature of its politics and contrasted with the multiracial (and thus imperial) nature of the United States. These propositions, which appeared in works on Japanese society intended for a general audience, reached the zenith of their popularity in the 1970s and 1980s, just as Japan seemed poised to overtake the US as the world's leading economy.

These ideas of Japanese distinctiveness and its lack of minorities, ironically, peaked at the same time reports of ethnoracial discrimination were proliferating. This contradiction was a sign that the discourse of homogeneity was not only factually compromised, but also hindering a candid assessment of the reality of prejudice and discrimination against minorities in Japan. This is not to say that the notion of a monoethnic Japan was wholly baseless: Japan, after all, had become considerably less diverse after it lost about three-quarters of its territories in World War II and subsequently engaged in the repatriation of minorities out of the Japan and saw the return of Japanese colonial emigrants. The Empire of Japan, while rife with Yamato ("racially Japanese") chauvinism, was clearly and explicitly a multiethnic agglomeration. That people of a certain status, or who inhabited a certain place, became "minorities in Japan" is a testament to the modernization and economic and territorial expansion of Japanese society in the past century and a half.

The modern notion of the Japanese nation is an ideological construct originating with the Meiji Restoration (1868). While proto-national senses of identity were in circulation in the Edo period (1600–1868), if individuals of that era were to have identified with a place, it would first have been their *han,* or feudal domain. Moreover, the spread of national solidarity in the Meiji period had to overcome centuries-old status differences that placed a considerable social distance between aristocrats and samurai on the one hand and peasants and outcastes on the other. The first decade of the Meiji era saw Japan's territory increased by a third with the annexation of previously ethnically distinct regions. In an effort to forestall the threat of Russian expansion, the Meiji regime formally annexed in 1869 the entirety of the northern island of Hokkaidō, with its indigenous Ainu people. Then in 1872, the regime invaded the Ryūkyū Kingdom, overcoming local resistance to annex an archipelago that previously had been subject to tributary relations with both Tokugawa Japan and Qing China. Having extinguished the Qing claim, the Meiji government incorporated the new territory into Japan as Okinawa, which became a prefecture in 1879.

The expansion of Meiji Japan into territories it previously had not controlled meant the incorporation of people who had historically been independent and were ethnically distinct from the inhabitants of the rest of Japan. In addition to territorial expansion, the government's efforts to reform the feudal status system in effect delineated yet another minority group, the Burakumin, who were designated *shin heimin* (new subjects) by an Emancipation Declaration in 1871. While the intent of the new policy was to bring people who had long belonged to a variety of inferior statuses into the fold of ordinary subjecthood, it effectively reified what became the Burakumin by creating a documentary basis by which they could be distinguished from other, ordinary *heimin*. Thus, in the first decade of the Meiji period, through both territorial expansion and social policy, the state effectively created three of the minority identities that have persisted into the present day.

Japan's self-imposed isolation under the Tokugawa regime quickly came to an end after the Meiji Restoration, and within a decade Japan had taken up the very same gunboat diplomacy that Western nations had engaged in throughout the region. Japan's imperialist expansion began on the Korean peninsula in the late 1870s, when they attempted to prise Korea from the grip of their tributary relationship with the Qing. The First Sino-Japanese War (1895–96), precipitated by a rebellion in southwestern Korea that gave the Japanese an excuse to intervene, marked the end of Qing dominance over Korea and the ascendance of Japanese influence. The war also delivered Taiwan, a Qing province, into Japan's possession, thus inaugurating a fifty-year stretch in which Japan extended its rule over populations that no one could construe to be ethnically Japanese. The Russo-Japanese War (1904–05) cemented Japanese rule over Korea, which became a protectorate of Japan in 1905 and was formally annexed as a colony in 1910. Japanese suzerainty over its Korean colony was marked by escalating assimilationism. To legitimate its rule, the Japanese state claimed racial isomorphism between ethnic Koreans and Japanese and even promoted intermarriage. By 1940, the colonial government in Korea had made Japanese the primary medium of instruction in schools, sidelining Korean itself, and the state even began requiring the adoption of a Japanese name for every ethnic Korean.

During the colonial period, ethnic Japanese migrated to Korea, as well as Manchuria (which Japan had invaded and taken over in the 1930s) and other parts of the growing Japanese empire, but a far larger number of Koreans emigrated to the Japanese archipelago. By the end of the Pacific War in 1945, over two million Koreans were resident in Japan proper. In spite of repatriation efforts after the Japanese defeat, nearly 700, 000 ethnic Koreans remained, staying on for a number of reasons: transportation was officially closed between Japan and Korea, the outbreak of the Korean War (1950–53) further complicated matters, and some Koreans had established livelihoods they were loath to leave. During World War II, Japan went on to conquer a broad swath of China, Southeast Asia, and Micronesia, all the while promoting interethnic solidarity through its ideology of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. During the Japanese occupation of its conquered territories, little migration into the Japanese mainland from these other areas occurred; Zainichi (Koreans "in Japan") ended up as the most visible ethnic minority in postwar Japan (Lie 2008).

Defeat, American occupation, and reconstruction in Japan starting in 1945 meant a retrenchment from imperialist ambitions of a multiethnic empire, and a shift towards the rhetoric of a democratic and homogeneous nation-state. But given how absorption of diverse peoples went hand-in-hand with the construction of the modern Japanese nation, the discourse of homogeneity never completely comported with the more complex reality. Activism among Japan's minorities in postwar Japan raised the profile of these populations that had faced considerable pressure to assimilate. In spite of emancipation in the 1870s, Burakumin in Japan continued to face barriers to full membership in Japanese society, suffering from marriage and employment discrimination, along with residential segregation. Activism among Burakumin dates at least to 1922 with the formation of Suiheisha, or "Leveling Society," which sought to combat prejudice and discrimination. In postwar Japan, discrimination against the Burakumin declined significantly. The Buraku Liberation

Society, founded in 1955, denounced those who defamed Burakumin, in effect silencing discourse on their fate in society. The rapid economic growth of the 1960s transformed the lives of many Burakumin, for whom residential segregation declined, and while conditions for them have improved, undercurrents of discrimination still persist in today's Japan. The Ainu, on the other hand, having borne the brunt of the expansion of Japanese rule and settlement in their native Hokkaidō, were the subjects of the Hokkaidō Aborigine Protection Act (1889), which cemented their status as targets of assimilation efforts by the Japanese state. The ethnic revival movement among the Ainu in the 1960s sought to improve their status in Japanese society. While these and other efforts resulted in the repeal of the Aborigine Protection Act in 1997, Ainu activism continues into the present day.

One of the most visible minorities in postwar Japan have been Zainichi Koreans, whose status has fluctuated with the vicissitudes of the region's geopolitics. Initial hopes of repatriation after 1945 evaporated with the Korean War, in spite of a short-lived effort in the 1960s to have some return to North Korea, though hopes of returning to a reunified Korea have persisted. Beginning in the 1980s, Zainichi activism has been directed more at carving out a niche in Japanese society, and conditions have improved. Additionally, in the 1980s, the peak of Japan's economic expansion witnessed a shortage of low-wage workers, resulting in an influx of migrants from all over Asia and elsewhere. Their presence sparked a controversy over their status in Japanese society, but the economic stagnation of the 1990s lessened the urgency of the debate. A stream of students and workers from China and South Korea continues to enter Japan in the twenty-first century, and their presence has been accompanied by poverty and discrimination. The small ethnic Chinese population that remained in Japan after World War II was generally better liked than their Zainichi Korean counterparts, in part because of their relative scarcity, but the growth of Chinese political and economic power, along with the more recent arrivals' association with criminality and antisocial activities, has contributed in recent decades to a decline in the esteem in which they are held among native residents. Another recent trend that has complicated notions of what it means to be Japanese has been the return of racially but not culturally Japanese people from places that previously had hosted a Japanese diaspora, such as Brazil and Peru. Finally, there has been a steady growth of foreigners in the past several decades, and they account for two percent of the total Japanese population in the late 2010s. There is in contemporary Japanese society a growing awareness of its fundamentally multiethnic constitution.

The Koreas

Korean nationhood has been complicated by the existence of two Korean states. In fact, the full realization of the nationalist vision of a modern, unified Korean nation-state has been thwarted repeatedly over the past hundred-odd years. When modern nationalism began to be taken up among Korean thinkers in the late nineteenth century, the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910) was lurching into its final decades after nearly five centuries of rule, under assault from domestic rebellions and foreign pressures – both from the West and from Japan. The nationalist ideal of a common group

identity among all classes was hindered by a rigid status hierarchy that saw the land-lord class (*yangban*) as scarcely the same as the polluted people (*chŏnmin*). Moreover, considerable regional cultural differences were not bridged until the twentieth century. Even then, Korea's annexation in 1910 by Japan and its absorption into a multiethnic Japanese empire put a halt for the next thirty-five years to nationalist Korean aspirations while channeling these unrealized hopes in an anticolonial and pro-independence direction that was to provide the basis of legitimacy for the Korean states, North and South, that succeeded Japanese rule.

Postwar Korea, South and North, was similar to Japan in that it, too was domi-nated by the discourse of homogeneity that extinguished the status distinctions that had divided Korean society – outcastes, *paekchong* or *chŏnmin,* were no longer con-sidered such. Korea as a unified polity dates to the Koryŏ dynasty (918–1392), but modern Koreans often consider the national lineage to be pure and homogeneous, dating back five thousand years. The reality is, of course, more complicated. The discourse of homogeneity often ignores – as did the Korean states after independence in 1945 – the considerable diaspora that began with migrations into the Qing and Russian empires in the 1860s and accelerated in the colonial era, at the end of which nearly two million ethnic Koreans had moved to Japan, a third of which remained to become today's Zainichi. During the same period, even more ethnic Koreans lived in northeastern China, which post-1949 Chinese state ethnic policy classified as a dis-tinct ethnicity, facilitating their continued cultural and linguistic distinctiveness.

After the beginning of the Reform era in China in 1979, an increasing number of these ethnic Koreans in China began migrating to South Korea, where they are often known as *Chosŏnjok*. As for ethnic Koreans who found themselves living in Soviet territory after the war, Stalin's paranoia about "Japanese spies" led to their forcible relocation to central Asia, principally Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, where they have assimilated much more thoroughly than their brethren in China. The growth in the Korean diaspora has continued unabated into the twenty-first century. First pro-moted by the South Korean government in the 1960s, emigration was seen as a way to relieve labor market and population pressures. The bulk of the diasporic Korean population went to the United States, but substantial numbers of people have also migrated to South America (principally Brazil and Paraguay) and Europe (chiefly Germany). At the same time, increasing multiethnicity within South Korea itself has produced a more diverse society, with arrivals by Chosŏnjok and other diasporic returnees, along with Vietnamese and other Southeast Asians, contributing to a growing rate of intermarriage. The state's policy, while officially multicultural, has largely been assimilationist in practice (Lie 2015).

The evolution of nationalism in Korea, along with conceptions of race and eth-nicity, thus began with the emergence of nationalist thought in intellectual discourse in the late nineteenth century, one that rejected the overwhelming weight of Chinese cultural influence in Korean high culture and sought indigenization. Nationalist aspirations then foundered on the shoals of Japanese imperialism and the division of the peninsula that followed the end of World War II and the Korean War (1950–53). The response to these traumas in both North and South Korea was a hypernational-ist assertion of ethnic and cultural homogeneity that occluded the political division of Korean territory and the diaspora. Indeed, up until the early 2000s, ethnic nation-alism reigned supreme in the popular mindset. A 1999 survey found that those who

saw "blood" as the defining commonality of the Korean nation constituted 68.2 percent of respondents. The following year another survey found 93 percent of respondents agreeing with the statement, "Our nation has a single bloodline" (Shin 2006). Shin thus concluded that ethnic nationalism was "a key organizing principle of Korean society," one that, "despite the presence and growing power of regional and global forces" was "not likely to disappear or grow weak in the foreseeable future." Nevertheless, when it came to attitudes towards unification of North and South, the influence of this belief was less clear. In analyzing another nationwide survey on national identity and unification conducted in 2000 in South Korea, Shin found that younger people appeared to be less interested in unification than older people. He hypothesized that either people support unification more strongly as they grow older, or there is a cohort effect, which means as younger South Koreans grew older, interest in unification decreased.

By the 2010s, a new generation of people in South Korea were emerging into adulthood with no memory of instability on the Korean peninsula and no contact with people north of the border. The cohort-effect hypothesis seems to have been borne out by time: a 2012 survey done by the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies found that more than 50 percent of respondents in their 20s had ambivalent or negative attitudes towards unification. Indeed, when confronted with the Korean term *uri nara*, or "our nation," many young Koreans these days tend to think only of the South. Even Chosŏnjok are often seen as outsiders, reflecting the ambivalent embrace of its diaspora by both the state and ordinary Koreans (Jo 2018; Kim 2016). Globalization seems to have contributed to a shift in attitudes about racial, ethnic, and national identity among South Koreans, who increasingly see their identity as defined by "modernity, cosmopolitanism, and status" – that is, possessing the necessary cultural capital to belong to an increasingly competitive society while at the same time conforming to traditional, often patriarchal norms (Campbell 2016).

China

China is a conundrum. Its sheer size gave it enormous influence over the better part of two thousand years in East and Southeast Asia, and today in terms of both population and territory it far outstrips its East Asian neighbors, Japan and Korea. The loss of this influence in mid-nineteenth century was consequently the defining historical trauma for Chinese modernity. The territory of today's People's Republic of China (PRC) roughly corresponds with that of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), which is highly consequential for any discussion of race, ethnicity, or nationalism in China, for the Qing empire itself was one ruled by a highly energetic ethnic minority over a diverse array of peoples. This rule was achieved in part by conquest, but also by collaboration and cooptation of existing elites. The lands of the Qing – and thus of today's PRC – comprise not just the core territory of central and southern China, but also the Manchu homeland in the northeast, formerly known as Manchuria, and also Turkic-speaking Muslim people in China's far west, who share similarities with the peoples of formerly central Asia, as well as Tibetans in the Himalayan Plateau, in addition to dozens of smaller minorities in China's extremely diverse southwest. Taiwan, too, contains a significant population that might easily be considered ethnic

Chinese, if not for the complication of the Chinese Civil War (1945–49) that saw Taiwan become the remaining territory of the Republic of China controlled by the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, or KMT). Today's China also comprises the two former colonial territories of British Hong Kong and Portuguese Macao, both of which were returned from their colonial rulers to the PRC in the 1990s, albeit with substantial grants of local autonomy. So while discourses of homogeneity dominated Japan and the Koreas from the mid-twentieth century onwards, no such discourse ever took hold in China. Qing "China" was explicitly a multinational conquest empire.

The various regimes that ruled during what effectively was a republican inter-regnum (1911–1949) also hewed to a multiethnic ideology of China. The PRC continued this way of thinking, dispatching expeditions throughout the 1950s to study and codify the various ethnicities that constituted the newly refounded Chinese nation-state that resulted in today's 56-ethnicity classification scheme (Mullaney 2010). Nearly ninety-two percent – more than 1.2 billion people – of the PRC's population today is considered Han Chinese, which leaves more than 100 million people belonging to the other 55 ethnicities under the official classification system. The ethnicities (*minzu,* also translated "nationalities") of China are not all analyti-cally congruent. One, the Hui, are mainly bound by lineage and religion; scattered as they are throughout China, and diverse in their cultural practices, they might other-wise be indistinguishable from the majority Han (Gladney 1991). Others, such as Tibetans in Tibet proper and the adjacent provinces of Qinghai, Sichuan, and Yunnan, as well as Uyghurs in Xinjiang, have distinct cultural practices and histor-ical memories that predate Chinese rule that thus form a basis for separatist claims, an enduring source of political tension since the earliest days of the PRC. Further complicating the situation, there are ethnic Kazakhs and Uzbeks in the far west, and ethnic Koreans in the northeast, who have nation-states on the other side of the Chinese border that might also represent their national identities, though this situation is not usually the source of irredentist or separatist contention. And finally, there are minorities in the southwest, such as the Hmong (or Miao, in Mandarin), whose ethnicities are essentially stateless, spanning international borders into Vietnam and Laos. These all are only the groupings resident within mainland China itself; there is also a considerable Chinese diaspora that spans the globe, with significant populations throughout Southeast Asia (with ethnic Chinese constituting a majority in Singapore), as well as emigrants to Europe, the Americas, Australia, Africa, and the Middle East. What it means to be a member of a multinational Chinese nation involves multiple overlapping modes of categorization is a compli-cated question indeed.

The Han majority

The largest ethnic category in China – indeed, the largest one on Earth – is the Han ethnicity. While seemingly straightforward, the ethnicity itself defies easy definition. "Han" is often conflated with "Chinese," but not everyone native to China is Han. The Han occupy a large and diverse expanse of territory, and they are divided by a great variety of cultural practices. The Han speak languages that fall into eight dis-tinctive families, each of which contains dozens of subcategories, many of which are mutually unintelligible even within language families. There is also a great divide in

cuisine, with rice dominating in the south and wheat in the north. What, then, holds this category together? Depending on whom one asks, Han is an ancient designation that dates back more than four thousand years, or it is a recent one, informed by Western notions of biological race and dating to the beginning of the twentieth century. The first, more primordialist perspective is dominant among mainland Chinese scholarship and is backed by the state; the latter comes from scholars working in a more constructivist and postmodern direction. The root of this disagreement lies in how one conceptualizes both *Han* and *minzu,* the former having only stabilized as a meaningful term in the late imperial era, and the latter concept not entering the Chinese lexicon until the beginning of the twentieth century.

The primordialist view takes a more flexible approach to each of those terms, treating the "Huaxia" as the core of the group that later became known as "Han," and tracing its origins to three eras in the ancient Chinese past: the Xia dynasty (21st century–18th century BCE), the Shang dynasty (17th century–1027 BCE), and the Western Zhou (1122–771 BCE), during which time the Huaxia grouping progressively absorbed increasing numbers of people as members. Xu Jieshen's (2012) recent account of this theory that emphasizes antiquity and agglomeration, which he terms the "snowball theory," claims descent from famed sociologist Fei Xiaotong. On the other hand, if one starts with a narrower definition of Han and *minzu,* treating them as relatively recent neologisms, then it follows that the category of Hanzu dates back only about a century, to the waning years of the Qing dynasty, when the exigencies of revolution pushed non-Manchu radicals to distinguish themselves from the ruling dynasty they sought to discredit by adopting the concepts of identity, such as *minzu,* that had been imported from the West through Japan. This line of thinking, emphasizing the recent origins of the Hanzu category and its discontinuity from historical antecedents, has been propounded by Dru Gladney (1994), and subsequently by Kai-wing Chow (2001). While these opposing views of Han origins might seem to have reached an "impasse," as Mullaney argues, the debate overall is a reminder that, when considering varying conceptualizations of ethnicity, one must take into account the historical and political context in which such conceptualizations arose (Mullaney 2012).

Getting to fifty-six

While the sheer size of the Han majority seems to place it in a class all to itself, the PRC government from its early days has been determined to treat it as merely one of the fifty-six constituent ethnicities of China's total population. The Qing empire had been explicitly multiethnic, in which the Han constituted the largest of the Manchu rulers' subject populations. During the republican era that followed the collapse of the Qing in 1911, the dominant conception of the incipient Chinese nation was a union of five ethnicities: Han, Manchu, Mongol, Hui (Muslim), and Tibetan. After the start of the Communist era in 1949, the state was guided by the Soviet example, which itself had followed Stalin's conception of nationality as a people bound by a common territory, a common language, a common economic life, and a common psychological make-up. In the early 1950s, amidst its consolidation of power, the government began a multi-year ethnic classification project to gain a better understanding of the population over which it had only recently attained power.

The impulse of this classification project came from the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) encounter with a bewildering variety of peoples during its most difficult years during the mid-1930s. During its Long March (1934–35), the CCP retreated from its southeastern center of power in Jiangxi province and made the difficult journey towards its wartime base, Yan'an in the northern province of Shaanxi. The CCP's path took it through China's southwest, including Guizhou and Yunnan provinces, which contained China's highest concentrations of ethnic minorities. The CCP, beset by existential threats from both the KMT and the Japanese, and faced with potentially hostile populations of non-Han in the southwest, as well as Muslims and Mongols in the north, chose to make peace with the minority populations it met by promising autonomy in an eventual Communist nation in exchange for wartime support (Gladney 2004).

Ethnic classification was important to the state for purposes of representation in government bodies such as the National People's Congress, in which seats had been specifically set aside for minority groups. Over the past few decades, those classified as minorities in China have also benefited from affirmative action policies in education as well as exemptions from family planning policies. Classification was first attempted by surveying the populations in question, asking people how they thought of their own identities. This approach ran into problems when surveys picked up hundreds of potential "ethnicities" – some people thought of themselves individually as ethnicities unto themselves. Such a result revealed the cultural and temporal boundedness of the concepts of race, ethnicity, and nationality. Those in the state had been working with Western- and Soviet-influenced understandings of those concepts, while their survey respondents had not necessarily ever encountered such understandings of identity. Faced with such classificatory chaos, the government's response was to send teams of ethnologists out into areas heavily populated by minorities in order to gain what they felt to be a more scientific understanding of the ethnic groupings. While these ethnological teams began with the Stalinist definition of a nationality, historian Thomas Mullaney (2010) has argued in his study of ethnic classification in Yunnan that ethnologists ultimately rendered groupings based heavily on linguistic principles, in some cases classifying, by commonality or similarity of language, people who had not necessarily thought of themselves as belonging to a singular group.

From China's 1982 census onwards, the state has officially recognized fifty-six ethnicities, while people belonging to potentially upwards of 300 other ethnic groups have remained unclassified or yet-to-be classified. This fifty-six-ethnicity model has thus been naturalized by the state and proven to be remarkably durable.

Xinjiang

The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is a large territory in China's far west that borders Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. The inhabitants thereof share many cultural affinities with the region's Central Asian neighbors, and hence the occasional appearance of "Chinese Turkestan" in historical literature, a name that has largely fallen out of use. The region is immense, taking up about one-sixth of the PRC's territory. The Qing empire began gaining control of the eastern portion of the territory in the late seventeenth century, and decisive conquests occurred during the reigns of Qing emperor Qianlong in the

1750s, an acquisition that is reflected in the current name: Xinjiang means "new frontier" in Mandarin Chinese. While rebellions erupted every few decades after the Qing asserted their suzerainty over the region, they were always able to be suppressed by imperial authorities, who were keen to neutralize foreign threats to their far western borderlands, which by the nineteenth century came primarily from the Russian empire. The frontier nature of the region kept it under the authority of Manchu and Mongol bannermen in a form of military rule, an arrangement that ended in 1884, when the Qing declared Xinjiang a province (as opposed to the outer dependency that it had been before). Han civil service degree holders were then on allowed in to administer the territory (Jacobs 2016).

The ethnonym that follows in the current official name of the region, Uyghur, points to what until recently was the dominant ethnic group there, a predominantly Muslim group that speaks varieties of a Turkic language. In the uncertain political atmosphere of 1930s and 1940s, various factions of Uyghurs and other peoples in the region successively declared two short-lived independent polities: the Turkish-Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan, and the East Turkestan Republic, and the latter's name has survived to the present day, appearing in separatist discourse. Conflict between Uyghurs and the government have formed a flashpoint in recent decades, centering on disputes over religious expression and large-scale Han migration into Xinjiang. While Uyghurs constituted about 90 percent of the population at the end of the Qing dynasty in 1911, today, at around 40 percent, their proportion of the region's population is nearly at parity with the ethnic Han (Chaudhuri 2018).

Ethnic tensions in Xinjiang lately have escalated. Two incidents in the past several years, widely reported in Chinese media, loom large in the public imagination. In October 2013, a car crashed into a wall at the edge of Tiananmen Square in Beijing, killing five, including the three inside the car. The Beijing police declared it a terrorist act by "suspects from Xinjiang." Several months later, in March 2014, eight masked figures wielding knives killed 29 and wounded more than 140 in the main train station of Kunming, capital of Yunnan province in China's southwest. Much public speculation, especially online, blamed Uyghurs in both incidents, reflecting a widespread perception in China, which had arisen only in the previous decade, linking Uyghurs to criminal behavior (Holdstock 2015). Developments in 2018 stirred further controversy, when international observers accused the PRC government of large-scale detentions of Uyghurs in reeducation camps, an escalation of an increasingly repressive security regime in Xinjiang. That Uyghurs have become such a focus of resistance to PRC rule is interesting in light of the fact that they did not necessarily think of themselves as forming one ethnicity until around the 1930s. Prior to this, people now considered Uyghur tended to identify more with their locality than any overarching ethnic category (Gladney 2004). Nevertheless, being treated as a group has caused the category to take on a life of its own, and today loosely organized diasporic Uyghur advocacy groups around the world advocate for better conditions in Xinjiang.

Tibet

Another flashpoint in ethnic relations in China that frequently graces newspaper headlines, modern Tibet does not encompass all ethnic Tibetans, many of whom also live in the neighboring provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan. The PRC

administrative territory known today as the Tibet Autonomous Region is roughly congruous with the area under the rule of the Dalai Lamas from the seventeenth century until 1959. Relations between Tibetans and the dynastic regimes in Beijing in the past few hundred years have been ambiguous, waxing and waning with the ability of a particular ruler to project authority. Tibetan autonomy in imperial times was aided by its geographical isolation. During the Qing dynasty, the polite fiction was maintained that the Dalai Lama was the emperor's protégé (in Qing eyes), and that the emperor was merely the Dalai Lama's secular patron (in Tibetan eyes). The Dalai Lama was the political and religious head of a government based in Lhasa, and succession was based on the belief in his ability to reincarnate. In the Qing dynasty, choosing the child reincarnation was often a matter of dispute between the Tibetan monastic establishment and the emperors in Beijing. Tibetans living beyond the Dalai Lama's territory, such as those in Sikkim (part of India today) and Bhutan were subjects of other rulers. After the Qing dynasty's collapse in 1911, central governments in Beijing (1911–1928) and then Nanjing (1928–1937) were weak and unable to assert their claim of sovereignty in the provinces. In Tibet, this meant de facto independence, in spite of Chinese republican claims otherwise, between 1913 and 1951. Matters changed significantly after the Communists came to power. Between 1949 and 1951, the PRC was able to annex the Tibetan areas of Qinghai, Sichuan, as well as Tibet proper, bringing them under direct rule from Beijing for the first time.

Chinese leader Mao Zedong's initial strategy for incorporating Tibet into the PRC was most likely gradualist (Weiner 2018) – though others have disputed this (Li and Wilf 2016) – holding off temporarily on changing the region's theocratic, manorial system. His hope was that then-regnant fourteenth Dalai Lama (b. 1935) and other Tibetan elites could be persuaded to change their society's social structure. Continuing Tibetan guerilla resistance, supported in part by the United States through the CIA, undermined Chinese efforts, and a failed Tibetan uprising that began in Lhasa in March 1959 ended with the Dalai Lama's flight and exile to Dharamsala, India, and the imposition of direct rule from Beijing. From there since then he has led a government in exile, advocating at first Tibetan independence, although in the late 1980s he began limiting his advocacy to increased Tibetan autonomy within China, to the chagrin of some in the Tibetan exile community. This moderation followed multiple large-scale protests and riots in Tibet in 1987 and 1988, after which the PRC rule in Tibet became increasingly hardline. The PRC position since the 1950s has been to emphasize the CCP's liberatory role in overthrowing theocratic feudalism in Tibet and its leading role in the region's economic development. This developmentalism was pursued consistently under successive premiers, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, and Hu Jintao (Horowitz and Yu 2015).

Both the international advocacy of the Dalai Lama and the developmental strategy of the PRC have, in a sense, failed in achieving their goals. The Dalai Lama has been unable to secure increased autonomy for Tibet, where PRC rule has become ever more repressive. The PRC government, on the other hand, in pursuing economic growth in the region has stoked resentment among Tibetans with the increasing encroachment of ethnic Han into the region's economic life (Goldstein 2004). The failures of the PRC's governance in Tibet resurfaced with large-scale protests in 2008 that coincided with the Beijing Olympics that summer. The heavy-handedness of the PRC security apparatus that has grown significantly since the 1990s has been sparked

in part by the leadership's fear of the Soviet experience, which in their view had been precipitated by overly lenient policies towards minority nationalities (Barnett 2016). Indeed, the PRC government generally treats unrest in Tibet (and Xinjiang) as existential threats to Chinese territorial integrity.

Hong Kong

Hong Kong's significance to Chinese history did not cease with its retrocession to Chinese rule in 1997 after more than 150 years of British rule. Home to nearly 7.5 million, this small territory on the south coast of China covers about 1108 kilometers and consists of three main land components: Hong Kong Island, a little over 78 square kilometers in area, which was ceded to Britain in perpetuity after defeating China in the First Opium War in 1842; the Kowloon peninsula, across the harbor just north of the Island and about 67 square kilometers, was ceded after China's defeat in the Second Opium War in 1860; and the New Territories, comprising the bulk of the remaining area of the territory, which in 1898 Britain was able to pressure the Qing government to lease rent-free for 99 years. The PRC was unwilling to entertain the possibility of a continued British presence after the conclusion of the lease, even in the portions of the territory that had been ceded in perpetuity, which were unsustainable apart from the rest. This led to negotiations between Britain and China that culminated in the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration, which ultimately resulted in the implementation of the Chinese government's "One Country, Two Systems" formulation, meant to govern the relationship between Hong Kong and mainland China under PRC rule for fifty years until 2047. Under the agreement, Hong Kong became (along with Macao) a Special Administrative Region, in which Beijing pledged not to alter the territory's economic and political system and to guarantee them a high degree of autonomy.

Little more than a fishing village when the British rule commenced in the 1840s, Hong Kong grew to be a major entrepôt in Britain's trading network in Asia, attracting many migrants who moved freely across an uncontrolled border. The conclusion in 1949 of the Chinese Civil War in favor of the Communists precipitated an influx of more than one million Chinese refugees into the colony and resulted in the imposition of border controls. In the late 1970s, after the cultural revolution, a further 500, 000 migrants from mainland China crossed into Hong Kong and settled there. More migrants arrived in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989. Ninety-two percent of the territory's population today is Han Chinese; the largest ethnic minority groups are Filipinos and Indonesians, primarily domestic workers. More than a century and a half of separate colonial rule has fostered a distinctive local identity, undergirded by the primary use of Cantonese (as opposed to Mandarin) (Lam and Cooper 2017). The handover of the territory to the PRC in 1997 sparked a rise in Chinese nationalist sentiment among Hong Kongers, but since the early 2000s, political relations have become more complicated (So 2015).

While the first few years under Chinese sovereignty were relatively quiescent, the PRC government's push in 2003 for the introduction of anti-sedition legislation in Hong Kong sparked controversy. Article 23 of the territory's de facto constitution, the Basic Law, called for the passage of national security laws, but the Legislative Council (Legco), Hong Kong's legislature, had not taken up legislation until Beijing's

prompting. Fearing the curtailment of the freedom of speech, half a million pro-testers in Hong Kong participated in demonstrations and were able to succeed in halting the law's passage. Since then, Beijing has pursued an increasingly interven-tionist policy, which has spurred a rise in localist sentiment (Fong 2017). Tensions have arisen as ties with China have grown. The burgeoning numbers of tourists since the permitting of individual travel in 2003, rising tenfold from a little more than four million annually in 2004 to more than 47 million in 2014, along with an influx of permanent residents (55 thousand annually), has led to shifts in the local economy, including rising housing costs. In 2008, a food-safety scandal involving tainted milk in mainland China caused a spike in mainlander purchases of milk powder in Hong Kong stores, leading to temporary shortages.

Protests against expectant mainland parents' taking advantage of Hong Kong's birthright residency policies erupted in 2011. In 2012, the PRC government attempted to implement a patriotic National Education curriculum in Hong Kong's schools, only to rescind the policy after an opposition rally attracted 130 thousand protesters and students threatened to strike. The year 2013 saw the Occupy Central protests calling for universal suffrage, and the Umbrella Movement, named for the protesters' defense against police pepper spray, arose in 2014 demanding an end to Beijing's restrictions on political candidates in local elections. Demands for greater democ-racy went unanswered by Beijing, and in Legco elections in 2016 the first candidates to advocate Hong Kong independence attempted to run. Hong Kong separatism, unthinkable only a few years prior, had morphed into a fringe political movement (Steinhardt, Li, and Jiang 2018). In September 2018, the Hong Kong National Party became the first political group banned by the government in the territory since the 1997 handover (Ramzy 2018). Large protests erupted in June 2019 in response to an attempt by the territorial government to pass an extradition law. Although the law, which would potentially have subjected Hong Kong residents to extradition to the mainland, was formally withdrawn by the legislature in October 2019 (BBC 2019), protests continued to the end of the year.

Taiwan

Ceded to Japan after China's defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, Taiwan spent the next fifty years as a Japanese colony. Upon its return to China at the end of World War II in 1945, rule was taken up by the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, or KMT), which was forced to retreat to Taiwan in the wake of its own defeat by the Communists in 1949. By 1950, Taiwan essentially hosted a KMT-ruled Republic of China rump state, with some coastal island territories (Kinmen and Matsu) close to Fujian province. Having lost US support, the KMT government on Taiwan was saved only by the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, which prompted President Harry Truman to dispatch the US Navy's Seventh Fleet to neu-tralize the Taiwan Strait. Since then, Taiwan (officially still the Republic of China, ROC) has maintained a separate political existence from the People's Republic of China on the mainland under US military protection.

Strangely enough, these events in the mid-twentieth century parallel those four centuries earlier during the Qing conquest of China. While the start of the Qing dynasty is usually dated 1644, the regime had to spend the next several decades

clearing its newly acquired territory of resistance. Ming dynasty (1368–1644) loyalists had fled to Taiwan in the 1660s and driven out Dutch colonists, only then to be defeated and conquered in the early 1680s by Qing forces. The seventeenth century thus saw the first waves of migrant settlers from mainland China, mostly from southern Fujian province, who with them their Southern Min language (the dialects of Xiamen and Quanzhou in Fujian) – today's Taiwanese language – and whose descendants comprise about 70% of Taiwan's current population. These migrants displaced much of the original aboriginal peoples, of Austronesian origin, from the coastal lowlands into more mountainous territory. Another mainland group that arrived around the same time were the Hakka (*Kejia* in Mandarin), whose origins lay in Guangdong and northern Fujian provinces. The latest major wave of migration came with the return of Taiwan to Chinese rule in 1945 and the Nationalist defeat in 1949, when more than one million people from all over the mainland fled with the KMT to Taiwan.

Ethnic divisions rooted in these historical developments have persisted ever since. The first four decades of KMT rule were repressive; government was dominated by KMT mainlanders and as late as 2008 the ROC government maintained that it was the sole legitimate government of all of China. The 1960s and 1970s were periods of rapid economic growth. The PRC displaced the ROC in the United Nations in 1971, and the US switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979. Under threat of increased international isolation, democratization began gradually under KMT liberalization in response to opposition protests in the 1970s and 1980s. Martial law, declared in the wake of the KMT defeat in 1949, was lifted in 1987, a year after opposition forces organized the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in 1986, which supports formal Taiwanese independence. The first direct presidential elections were held in 1996. Political liberalization has created more space for the assertion of minority identities. Aboriginal peoples were accorded greater recognition in early 2000s, and now fourteen tribes are official recognized by the government. Additionally, a growing number of foreign spouses and contract care workers have been entering Taiwan since the 1990s, adding to the island's diversity (Liang 2018).

Nearly seventy years of political separation has resulted in a sense of a distinctive Taiwanese identity, especially among younger people, and prospects for reunification remain uncertain. The progressive ratcheting up of pressure for reunification from the PRC under President Xi Jinping and the re-election in 2020 of DPP candidate Tsai Ing-wen to a second four-year term as Taiwanese president, helped in no small part by anxieties provoked by developments in Hong Kong, have further clouded relations (Myers and Horton 2020). Increased economic integration in the first two decades of the twenty-first century has not been accompanied by increased social or political integration, and the Taiwanese populace overwhelmingly supports the current ambiguous status quo (Dittmer 2017).

Conclusion: Changing Notions of Belonging

Minzoku is a Meiji-era Japanese neologism that was created to correspond with Western notions of race, ethnicity, and nationality. Written with two Chinese characters, the term made its way back to China as *minzu* and to Korea as *minjok,* and in

each language the term is used in similar ways. Hence, China's use of *minzu* to refer to each of its 56 officially recognized ethnicities and Korea's use of *minjok to* refer to racially based nationality. It is telling that the current word in East Asia is a Western-inspired neologism, for modern notions of political association based on shared cultural characteristics began to displace indigenous notions of belonging in the nineteenth century, when European and American incursions into the political and economic life of the peoples of East Asia began to grow rapidly.

Japan quickly grew to become a multiethnic empire, incorporating Korea into its grasp, but faced defeat in war and a retrenchment into a monoethnic identity that only recently has given way to a greater general recognition of diversity. Korea, on the other hand, was unable to reconstitute itself as a unified nation-state after independence from Japanese rule because of Cold War divisions that have endured to this day. China, too, faces a multiplicity of contention in establishing itself as a national replacement for a multiethnic imperial polity, with the ethnic tensions in Xinjiang and Tibet, the restive former colonial enclave of Hong Kong in its south, and a Cold War–era impediment to its irredentist ambitions for Taiwan off the southeast coast.

One of the great historical ironies is that it is precisely in East Asia that the idea of the nation-state – one polity, one ethnicity – has come closest to being attained and widely believed. While very few French or British people believed that France or the United Kingdom was ethnically homogeneous, a sizable number of Chinese, Koreans, and Japan have recently come to take for granted that their polities are basically ethnically homogeneous (Lie 2019). To be sure, notions of race, nationhood, ethnicity, and diversity continue to evolve in East Asia, and there is surely no logical endpoint.

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