John Lie. *Multiethnic Japan*. (Cambridge and London: Harvard, 2001) xiii, 248pp., $43.00 paper.

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In preparing *Multiethnic Japan*, sociologist John Lie set out to describe the lives of the new Asian workers in Japan, but ended up demonstrating that Japan has long been and remains very much a multiethnic country.

Lie's case study is extraordinarily well documented. In it he describes how the Ainu, Burakumin, Okinawans, Koreans and Chinese came to be invisible ethnicities in Japan, and how the accelerated arrival of foreign workers in the 1980s re-opened the contemporary discourse on Japanese identity. He describes the "racialization" of the contemporary Asian foreign workers and their confinement to dirty, difficult and dangerous jobs. He tells of the of once-silent minorities emerging from discrimination in employment, residence and marital choice, and the internal angst of being unable to claim essential equality or admit, let alone embrace, their ethnic identities. But he does all this almost in passing; this is not their story, but the story of Japanese nationhood.

He argues the contemporary insistence on Japanese ethnic homogeneity is both very recent and belied by her history of modernization (state formation, colonization, and capitalist expansion), and provides ample evidence to be taken seriously. Lie argues that Japan was multiethnic to begin with and that today's

emerging minorities were established in the pre-modern period with development of social outcastes as the proto-Burakumin and the Yamato conquest and assimilation of the Ainu, were augmented in the modern period with the colonization of the Ryuu Kyuu islands, Taiwan, Korea and the Chinese northeast, and continue today as a consequence of the capitalist demand for low-wage workers. Japanese nationhood could emerge only with her modernization; only with the Meiji restoration of 1868 can Japan be said to have begun the process of nation formation.

The ideology of Japanese homogeneity emerged, Lie asserts, as Japanese of all walks of life for the first time developed the means (media, affluence and a democratic state) to perceive themselves as a whole, exactly as they recovered from the ruins of colonialism and all-out war. It is now to be challenged by a more nuanced reality. Lie ends by considering processes by which social classification and signification limit the freedom of individuals to fully participate in their own realities, noting that the reemergence of regional identities spearheads environmental activism (p171) and the attempt to conform to an imagined Japanese essence stifles individualism (p165).

Lie compares Japanese experiences of race, ethnicity and nationality to similar experiences in the United States, Britain and Europe, concluding the Japanese are not particularly racist. The comparisons warn us not to set the Japanese too apart from ourselves, but fall short of a satisfying comparative analysis.

Lie's culminating foray into sociological theory argues for conceptual acuity while illuminating the Japanese lack of clarity in the language of ethnicity, but falls short of providing a comprehensive theory to tie together the elements of identity formation and signification he has presented us. This he leaves to others.