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Kosaku Yoshino (ed.). *Consuming Ethnicity and Nationalism: Asian Experiences*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1999. ISBN 0-7007-1189-9.

*Consuming Ethnicity and Nationalism: Asian Experiences* presents a wide-ranging collection of essays which apply a consumption approach to the study of ethnicity and nationalism. At the very outset, the editor makes clear that the collection of papers uses the theoretical model of a 'sociology-of-everyday-life' approach (p. 3) to cultural nationalism. Yoshino uses Carrier's<sup>1</sup> (1996: 128, cited in Yoshino, p. 2) broad definition of consumption in that its 'use can be mental or material', 'the objects can be things, ideas or relationships', and 'the association can range from ownership to contemplation'. Within this, the editor's aim is that the essays examine 'the arenas where nationalism is being produced and reproduced in ways that have yet to be studied in depth' (p. 1).

The eight contributions to the volume cover the countries of Japan (with the largest focus with three chapters), Sri Lanka, China, Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan and Sri Lanka. Through these specific 'Asian experiences', a variety of empirical data is utilized to examine the various forms of cultural nationalism and how these are produced, consumed and reproduced in the countries under study. If the aim of the Introduction was to throw open areas for conjecture and debate, it has done so. However, this has also become its weakness in that it is lacking in-depth analysis, with many of the debates on nationalism and consumer culture remaining unexamined. Alluding to the main debates in the fields of study would at least have better contextualized the contributions that follow.

The focus of chapter 1 is Japan. Yoshino examines how the dynamics of Japanese cultural distinctiveness (*nihonjinron*) is used in the production, reproduction, distribution and consumption of contemporary Japanese nationalism. Yoshino uses the concepts of 'cultural intermediaries' working in the 'cultural marketplace' in promoting 'cultural nationalism'. While these concepts are extremely innovative and exciting, at no point does it become clear to us what these terms allude to exactly. There is no clear definition of what these concepts mean for

Yoshino (and consequently for the reader) to further engage us in these debates.

The second contribution by Steven Kemper brilliantly uses the methodological approach of the 'practices of everyday life' in examining how state-run lotteries for development projects in Sri Lanka generate nationalism in the lives of ordinary Sri Lankans. Lotteries are something that everybody can relate to and which are very much part and parcel of people's everyday lives anywhere. People of course buy into it in the hope of making it big and consuming the monetary gains thereof. That lotteries can also be a form of 'consuming nationalism' and be used by the state to produce and consume nationalism; this is not something one normally thinks about. Kemper's contribution thus provokes our awareness into looking at such a taken-for-granted, everyday phenomenon in a new light.

Chapters 3 and 4 (Gladney and Hsieh) focus on the theme of how the periphery legitimizes the centre to generate ideas of cultural nationalism, and how the dominant groups consume the constructed ethnicity of minority groups in China and Taiwan respectively. Both look at aboriginal peoples, and Gladney attempts to take his analysis further by looking at the gendered implications of his study. Gladney examines a wide range of vivid visual forms of the mass media as well as paintings to define and represent the 'minority' as exotic, primitive and different from the majority Han group in China. Gladney introduces us to a whole array of visual forms which challenges us to think. But at the same time, he tries to cover too much ground and ends up being too diffuse in concretizing his analysis. Hsieh's contribution continues well from Gladney's stance of the periphery legitimating the centre. Using the lens of tourism, Hsieh explores how tourist institutions help to construct images of minority ethnic groups for tourists who are part of the majority Taiwanese/Chinese dominant ethnic group. Hsieh's contribution is straightforward and makes for an easy read, but does not introduce us to any new theoretical outlooks.

Kendall's contribution in chapter 5 is a comparative study of the social artefact of the museum which is closely allied with

tourism. She examines the National Folklore Museum in Seoul and the Yunnan Museum of Nationalities in China and attempts to show how nationalisms contained within museums are infinitely variable (p. 126). She contrasts the unitary nature of the Korean museum with the multi-ethnic Chinese one and analyses how these two very different museums package and represent stories of 'us' and 'them', internally and externally, for public consumption. Kendall innovatively and imaginatively moves us away from viewing the museum as simply an educational space to one of negotiations between the producer and consumer.

Malaysia forms the focus of Shamsul's contribution in chapter 6. He examines the university system and the ever increasing importance of anthropology as a discipline and how the combination of these two factors form the epistemological product that Malaysians consume and reproduce in order to create ideas of cultural differences in the multi-ethnic settings of Malays, Chinese and Indians. Shamsul's analysis, linking social sciences to nation building, is carried out insightfully.

The focus returns to Japan again in chapters 7 and 8 (Yano and Iwabuchi). Yano examines the production and consumption of a genre of music called *enka* (performed song) in the invocation of the *furusato* (homeland). Though peripheral, much of the *enka* is worked through the lens of nostalgia – not just of the past but also of distant places. *Furusato* in twentieth-century Japan is explored at various levels: not so much city versus countryside, but rather Tokyo versus non-Tokyo; and more importantly, not so much a place as an abstraction and a concept. Yano also explores the 'nation-as-family' thesis, wherein the mother is not just the source of personal identity but national identity as well. Yano's analysis is beautifully crafted at various levels and demonstrates how when concepts are hard to grasp and define, the more powerful is its metonymic shorthand.

Iwabuchi's contribution seems to have two parts: on the one hand, Japan's 'new Asianism' which is economy oriented; and on the other Japan's 'postmodern return to Asia', where Japanese cultural industries are penetrating fast-growing Asian

markets. Iwabuchi however points out that these are not purely Japanese goods per se, but rather those pertaining to urban middle-class culture which have been indigenized from the West – following in a manner of speaking, Sony’s famous push towards ‘global localization’. He attempts to tie in these two parts by articulating a thesis of ‘Asia-becoming-as-Japan’. This is where we have our doubts. While it is true that Japan has become a role model for many Asian countries, it is certainly not the all-encompassing role model for all of Asia – a point which Iwabuchi misses completely. For example, the south Asian countries of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka look more towards the economic models of Singapore and Malaysia.

This is an interesting collection of some Asian experiences, rich in exploring varied ethnographic forms. This in itself is of considerable value, particularly because of an attempt to collect Asian case studies and its systematic comparison. Although we have highlighted some flaws in this volume, it still alerts us to the many forms and ways in which nationalism can be innovatively produced, consumed, distributed and reproduced.

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<sup>1</sup> Carrier, James G. (1996) ‘Consumption’ in Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer (eds) *Encyclopaedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 128-129.