

Interesse an Afrika (hierzu ein eigenes, lesenswertes Kapitel auf den Seiten 119 bis 151).

Die Frage, die im Untertitel des Buches gestellt wird und der das abschließende Kapitel gewidmet ist (S. 220 bis 231), bleibt aber eher verschwommen, ja im Grunde unbeantwortet. Das könnte daran liegen, dass die Autorin eigentlich nicht entscheiden mochte, ob eine starke Orientierung der Entwicklungshilfe an den Interessen der Privatwirtschaft, am Aufbau materieller Infrastrukturen im Widerspruch steht zu dem, was man *good governance* nennen kann oder nennen sollte. Diese Nicht-Auflösung eines Geheimnisses verführt sie dann zu einem gewaltigen Schlusssatz, über den man streiten müsste – oder ein weiteres Buch schreiben sollte: “Während Japan in den Entwicklungsländern *good governance* fördern will, ist dieses Prinzip im eigenen Land noch nicht durchgesetzt“ (S. 231).

Udo E. Simonis

JOHN LIE, *Multiethnic Japan*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2004. 248 pages, £ 12.95. ISBN 0-674-01358-1 (pb) / 0-674-00299-7 (hb)

The cliché of Japanese homogeneity is torn to pieces in John Lie’s book. One could (almost) constantly murmur agreement – if only the book kept its promises.

In his very emotional book Lie vehemently criticizes the theory of *nihonjinron* that argues that “the Japanese,” as a completely homogeneous group, are quite apart from the rest of the world. In fact, the Japanese population is clearly not as homogeneous as it might appear at first glance. Based on many examples, Lie demonstrates not only the exceptions to this assumed conformity, but also describes how the cliché of homogeneity came into being. The chapter about popular culture is particularly revealing. He lists foreign influences and important foreigners or members of minorities who have shaped this culture, including baseball stars and *enka* singers. In other chapters, he describes briefly the most important minorities and explains the origins of the idea of Japanese homogeneity: who developed it, why, and when. Again, he gives numerous examples not only of ultranationalists but also of “ordinary Japanese” and even foreigners, showing how deep-seated the idea is in their minds.

All this is correct, and his enthusiasm deserves praise: any book that takes on *nihonjinron* can only help to restore the balance, the more so as it is personal and full of lively examples. After all, a large part of *nihonjinron* literature is personal and emotional, while the critical texts, mostly dry academic analyses, do not offer much to counter this populism.

Unfortunately, the execution of this task is imprecise at best, if not to say sloppy, thus discrediting the whole approach. The book’s troubles start with the title: it could have been named “Multicultural Japan”, or “Japan’s Minorities”,

perhaps with the addition "The illusion of homogeneity". However, all these titles exist already. The author's decision to speak of "multiethnic Japan" compels him to define ethnicity in extremely broad terms. He offers such a definition only reluctantly: An ethnic group, so he maintains, is "any sufficiently large body of people whose members regard themselves as members of a 'nation'" (p. 3), adding that any kind of differentiation or discrimination from outside could also be a sufficient criterion. Apparently, this addition is made primarily in order to include the discriminated (but according to the general, even their own, understanding, not ethnic!) minority of *burakumin* in the definition.

Lie never discusses the relationship between ethnicity and nationality, culture, race, or descent, and even rejects the concepts of nation and race as not being useful – although they do appear throughout the book. Knowing, presumably, that his own broad definition of ethnicity differs so widely from the normal use of the term that it not only becomes almost meaningless but also does not even comprise all his examples, he often uses the term "non-Japanese Japanese" instead. It is never defined but seems to include a wide range of minorities, such as *kikoku shijo* ("returnees") who grew up abroad and have only a somewhat different cultural background, as well as Southeast Asian workers and *nikkeijin* (ethnic Japanese with a special visa status) from South America.

The lack of a clear definition for his most central terms makes it difficult to follow Lie's arguments. It also causes misunderstandings between him and his interview partners. Most of the apparently numerous people to whom he talked (both "Japanese" and "non-Japanese Japanese") insist stubbornly that Japan is a monoethnic society – and it probably is, in their definition.

Even Lie himself admits that the question of monoethnicity is "a matter of degrees and definitions" (p. 2). The statistics about foreigners he offers in the beginning, more as illustrations than as proof, are from various sources and based on estimates of overlapping groups of "non-Japanese Japanese". They include, among others, Ainu, Koreans, children of mixed ancestry, foreigners (p. 4), visa overstays, and "illegal disguised foreign employees" (p. 19). The figures given are vague and even questionable. They certainly cannot support the claim, for example, that Japan is now as multiethnic as the UK was at the beginning of the 1990s (p. 4). While it is obviously difficult to harmonise the categories of such multi-source data, precise distinctions between nationality, visa status, descent, etc. are the more important in Lie's own qualitative data.

The fact that his interview partners happily mix definitions, on the other hand, is quite illustrative for the task of making differences in the assumed homogeneity visible. One person, for example, regards sportsmen Ramos and Akebono as Japanese because they adapt to Japanese society, while someone else judges from appearances alone and gets confused regarding *zainichi* (long-term Korean residents: Japanese!) and Ainu (non-Japanese!) (p. 142). The quotes from interviews, though anecdotic, offer a wealth of opinions on ethnicity and minorities. It is a pity that most of the interview partners are only introduced according to



one characteristic: a student, a housewife, a Southeast Asian worker, a middle-aged office worker. There is no list of interviews in the huge list of references, although this could have provided additional data such as date and place of the interview, age, profession, and self-declared ethnicity of the speaker. Protecting anonymity is laudable, but more information would help to match several statements by one person, and to put quotes in context.

*Multiethnic Japan* offers an enjoyable and straightforward introduction to the topic: it shakes up superficial ideas about "homogeneous Japan" and presents plethora of anecdotes and interesting facts for bar-room politics. For a serious confrontation with *nihonjinron*, however, a sounder line of argument is necessary.

Isa Ducke