

five), procedures in the small estates distribution section (chapter six) and a short eight-page final chapter dealing with procedures in the Public Trust Corporation which deals with the movable property not exceeding 600,000 Ringgit Malaysia left by the deceased.

The book is apparently written with the general public in mind. It explains the steps involved in getting the benefits as legal heirs to a deceased's estate. To further facilitate the understanding, as the author rightly points out in the preface, the book illustrates "the process flow for the administration of estates" in the form of charts. The book should, therefore, serve the public well. The book, however, fails to attain its second objective which is to highlight "the lacunae or ambiguity of the statutory provisions that may affect the process of administration" (p. iii). Admittedly, there are occasional references to some of the ambiguities in the book but these are not spelled out clearly. Hence it escapes the attention of casual readers. What then is the conclusion of the book? Unfortunately, the author has not provided any concluding chapter summarizing the findings, threading together the various chapters and listing the contributions this book makes. In the absence of this chapter, the readers are left to figure out for themselves the benefits of perusing this otherwise well-written book. The book, nevertheless, succeeds in examining the laws and procedures as provided by the applicable statutes in the administration of estates in Malaysia.

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**Modern China's ethnic frontiers: A journey to the West.** By Hsiao-ting Lin. London: Routledge Studies in the Modern History of Asia, 2011. pp. 192. ISBN: 978-0-415-58264-3 (Hardcover).

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China is generally known for its phenomenal economic growth mostly due to its capacity to manufacture products at low-cost. However, there are other features of this country which are the subjects of scholarly works. Studies carried out on China's ethnic-frontiers territoriality is of particular importance. However, the main focus of most of those studies

has been on China's Tibetan frontier, thus, neglecting its other ethnic frontiers. Hsiao-ting Lin in *Modern China's Ethnic Frontiers* attempts to redress this imbalance.

Building on his vast experience and close association with the Tibetan issue, Hsiao-ting Lin points out the significance of other ethnic peripheries of China. He argues that the study of modern China's inner-Asian ethnic borderlands is as important as the study of the Tibetan ethnic frontier. The arguments of Lin's work are largely based on primary sources, such as Academia historica (Taipei), President Chiang Kai-shek collections, and the Kuomintang party archive (Taipei). The author focuses on the ethnic policies of Han Nationalists and their subsequent ramifications on the formation of Modern China's Central Asian frontier and its border security. He argues that because the Chinese Nationalists were very concerned about the regime security and survival, their ethnic policies were influenced by their pragmatist and opportunistic nationalism rather than their revolutionary ideologies (p. xxiii).

After providing a comprehensive background on the last decade of the Qing Dynasty in the first chapter, the author enumerates various attempts by the Nationalists, during their early years, to address China's ethnic issues. In the second chapter, he explains the way the Nationalists tried to gradually decrease the privileges enjoyed by local nobles. Besides this, some institutional reforms were also carried out such as forming Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission as well as establishing nationalist outposts such as "commissioners" to monitor autonomous authorities (pp. 24-25). The most significant dimension of its ethno-politics was to control the minorities' education system through various methods. These ranged from penetrating into already established institutions to establishing new parallel institutions, and attracting non-Hans to China proper for training (pp. 31-32).

The third chapter highlights the impact of Japanese occupation of Manchuria and Coastal China on the ethnic policies of the nationalists. The fear of Japan's further advancement into Inner-China, and various crises among warlords in the Southwest forced the nationalists to think of the Northwest as their alternative power base. Nevertheless, the author asserts that despite huge efforts made by them, the nationalists' influence was as weak as their influence in the Southwest (pp. 35-39).

In chapter four, the author concentrates on the Nationalists' war against the Japanese in 1937 and the involvement of the Soviet Union in it. He underlines the impact of this war and the subsequent Soviet support to the Nationalists on the frontier designs of China. Having lost the strategic positions especially China's coastal areas to the Japanese, the Nationalists, on the one hand, gradually abandoned their Sino-centric assimilation policy toward ethnic minorities as they feared that such policies could make some ethnic groups support the Japanese and on the other hand, they made compromises with Moscow over China's ethnic peripheries in exchange of support in a way that some areas such as Xinjiang, Gansu and Shaanxi provinces, became Soviet dependencies (p. 57).

The next chapter is devoted to an assessment of the impact of two international incidents on China's ethnic territorial policy. These were, first, the surprise attacks of the Germans on the Soviet Union and the second being the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbour in Hawaii. These attacks brought significant power-shifts between the Nationalists and ethnic warlord regimes in the Western part of China (p. 73). On the one hand, the Nationalists found the US as their new backer, and on the other hand, fearing Soviet defeat by Hitler, the ethnic provinces then under Soviet influence redirected their loyalty from Moscow to Nationalists (p. 74). This relaxation provided the Nationalists with an opportunity to work towards strengthening their position on the ethnic frontiers through wars and bargaining (pp. 75-77). Furthermore, given the Japanese occupation of coastal China, the allies helped the Nationalists in building routes for communication which, in turn, consolidated the latter's presence in Central Asian peripheries. This also made them seek relationships with Middle Eastern countries through Muslim ethnic celebrities (pp. 86-90).

The final chapter discusses Chiang's invitation to Cairo Summit in 1973. According to the author, it changed the Nationalists' policies from pragmatism to idealism. Under the shadow of their new prestige, the Nationalists pursued developing their New Border Defence System with more confidence. However, the secret recognition of Outer Magnolia by the Soviets and the Americans in 1945, the Yalta Agreement and its consequent domino effects on other ethnic peripheries forced the Nationalists once again to struggle for improvement of their border defence capability in Central Asia in a pragmatic rather than idealistic

manner (pp. 99-107). Meanwhile, the communist advancement, made Central Asian peripheries central to the nationalists' policies as they were determined to retain these areas as power base.

The book is significant because it helps shift the focus of concern about ethnic minorities in China from Tibet to other areas of the country. Although there are at least five major ethnic groups in China (Han Chinese, Manchus, Mongols, Tibetans and Hui Muslims), the focus of discussion is on the treatment by Beijing of its ethnic minorities especially Tibetans and the Uyghurs following the anti-government riots in Lhasa and Khotan in 2008 and Uyghur-Han ethnic clashes in 2009. As a matter of fact, these non-Tibetan ethnicities play as important role as do the Tibetans in Chinese politics.

The book succeeds in providing a clear picture of ethnic-politics in the Nationalist era, and underscores the historical role of Central Asian peripheries in the shaping of modern China. However, the analysis in the book revolves mostly around external factors whether it is the "Japanese occupation of Manchuria", "Nationalists and the Japanese war", "Pearl Harbour surprise attacks", or the "Cairo Summit". Therefore, while Lin succeeds in proving that the Nationalists' ethnic policies were based on pragmatism, the internal factors forcing nationalists for adopting such policies are not highlighted by him. For example, he does not take into account the internal ground realities of the North-Western region which defied the Nationalists' idealistic ethnic policies. The realities were the following: First, the various ethnic groups were concentrated in certain specific areas. For example, in Xinjiang province more than 75 per cent of the population were Uyghurs. Second, geographically the North-Western regions populated by certain ethnic groups were isolated, i.e., Xinjiang was cut-off from the rest of China proper by Gobi Desert. Third, religions practiced in the North-Western region provided the people of those areas with a sense of unity. For example, the Uyghurs' Qur'ān and 'ulamā' were important unifying factors. Fourth, people of those areas had their written scripts as unifying force and communication tool. For instance, Uyghurs had a written script since seventh century. Finally, they had recent claim of statehood, i.e., the struggle for independence in Xinjiang had started long before the rise of Han nationalism (Katherine P. Kaup, *Creating the Zhuang: Ethnic Politics in China*, London: Lynne Rienner, 2000, pp. 55-59).

Furthermore, comparing the Nationalists' and Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) nation building approaches, one may find that the Nationalists failed to take into account the above mentioned facts. While Mao subscribed to a bottom-up approach maintaining that "in the case of China we cannot start with the whole, but must start with its parts" (Kaup, p. 66). Sun Yat-sen believed on top-down approach saying that "we must facilitate the dying out of all names of individual peoples inhabiting China" (Kaup, p. 62). Additionally, the role model of the communists was the Soviet Union which was adjacent to China with ethnic groups such as Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and Uzbeks living across Sino-Soviet border. On the other hand, the Nationalists' role model was the United States of America which had huge differences in terms of history, society and culture with China.

Last but not least, the communists' approach to deal with China's ethnic minorities was in tandem with their Marxist-Leninist ideology as they believed that in their journey toward socialism these ethnic differences would naturally vanish (Kaup, pp. 64-65). That is why, instead of strict implementation of assimilation, CCP attempted creating additional minority regions, i.e., Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in 1955, Guangxi Zhuang and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Regions in 1958. The process was continued in such a way that by 1965, there were 29 autonomous prefectures and 64 autonomous counties/leagues.