



Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China (Asia: Local Studies / Global Themes)

Thomas Mullaney

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China is a vast nation comprised of hundreds of distinct ethnic communities, each with its own language, history, and culture. Today the government of China recognizes just 56 ethnic nationalities, or *minzu*, as groups entitled to representation. This controversial new book recounts the history of the most sweeping attempt to sort and categorize the nation's enormous population: the 1954 Ethnic Classification project (*minzu shibie*). Thomas S. Mullaney draws on recently declassified material and extensive oral histories to describe how the communist government, in power less than a decade, launched this process in ethnically diverse Yunnan. Mullaney shows how the government drew on Republican-era scholarship for conceptual and methodological inspiration as it developed a strategy for identifying *minzu* and how non-Party-member Chinese ethnologists produced a "scientific" survey that would become the basis for a policy on nationalities.

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