

Ethnicity and Sociopolitical Change in Africa and Other Developing Countries: A Constructive Discourse in State Building

Santosh C. Saha



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This edited collection of essays answers a basic question posed by contemporary discourse on state building: How might people's identification with a particular ethnic group matter? Essays in this book use an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach to understanding regional and local community culture and sociopolitical development in developing countries-especially in Sub-Saharan Africa-to argue that the state, as well as civil society, confers on cultural differences a legitimacy that can be achieved in no other way but by positive cooperation. Contributors from different countries look at local patterns in state building and modernization as they have unfolded over the course of the last fifty years. They claim that the people and ethnic groups in most developing countries adhere to a concept of popular sovereignty that testifies that aspects of positive and moral ethnicity can contribute to social change as in China, economic development as in India, or in a democratization process as in Rwanda and Burundi. The eventual methodological assumption made by these essays presumes that ethnic conflicts in such countries as Cyprus, Turkey, India, and Rwanda have no moral sanction; ethnicity has not assumed a political ideology. One conclusion reached by the contributors is that some form of accommodation between opposing ethnically diversified groups, as well as between state and ethnic elements, is feasible.

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