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Title: Review of *Ethnic Groups and the State*, edited by Paul Brass (London and Sydney: Croom Helm), 341p, 1985

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Short reviews

Paul Brass (ed.), **ETHNIC GROUPS AND THE STATE**, London and Sydney, Croom Helm, 1985, 341 pp., £17.95.

Aside from the introductory chapter, the essays in this volume originated in a seminar on 'the role of the state and of government policy in the formation and/or decline of ethnic identities in multi-ethnic societies' that was held at the University of Washington, Seattle, in 1980. The introduction, which elaborates an 'elite competition theory of ethnic group formation and ethnic group conflict', took shape later as Paul Brass tried to theorise about the influence of the state on the development and relations of ethnic groups. Paul Brass's 'elite competition theory' addresses eight tightly packed and argued studies, five of which treat historic European situations, while two refer to Africa, and the last reviews recent decisions and policies on Indian tribal autonomy in the United States. The diversity of issues, data and approaches, coupled with the uniformly high quality and the cogent analyses of these accounts, enhance the interest and significance of this collection. Based on a work processor, the text is surprisingly free of typing errors, except for eight lines of gobbledegook on page 126.

Following an introduction at a general and abstract level which summarises obliquely an extensive range of African political situations and experience, Crawford Young discusses certain assumptions and implications of the transplanted European ideas and forms of the state for ethnicity in colonial and postcolonial Africa. Kemal Karpat reviews pre-nineteenth century administrative policy in Ottoman Turkey and argues that it positively minimised ethnicity and ethnic differences among its subjects by organising the population confessionally. David Paul reviews the genesis and early years of Slovak nationalism under Hungarian rule, 1870–1910, and stresses the formative roles of various Slovak elites in promoting this development. With no reference to elites, Paul Warwick and Leonard Cohen provide a detailed and technical analysis of spoilt votes in Yugoslav elections between 1953 and 1969 to establish distinctive patterns and changes for various nationalities and economically distinct regions. Likewise without mention of elites, Davydd J. Greenwood reviews and interprets slices of Spanish history to argue that Basque, Castilian and Andalusian 'ethnicity' all derive from state policies and arrangements instituted at different times, and are therefore equally 'true' or 'false'. Maureen Covell reaches similar conclusions by reviewing the history of Belgium from its foundation in 1830 until 1981, stressing the centrality of political elites in the process, and argues that ethnicity and ethnic issues only emerged after confrontations on religion, education and class had set the pattern of 'bureaucratic patronage'. Using Weberian concepts and approaches, Heribert Adam demonstrates the irrelevance of legitimacy and elites for the racist *Herrenvolk* democracy of South Africa, as Pierre van den Berghe labelled it years ago. Whether his analysis overrates the strength of that state may be shown very soon. The collection concludes with Alvin Ziontz' careful and valuable account of changing U.S. congressional and legal rulings and attitudes to the issue of internal autonomy for their numerous Amerindian tribal groups.

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The editor's introduction, which sets out a general theory of ethnicity formation through the competing policies and alignments of their elites in relation to the state, is both the most ambitious and the most problematic chapter in the book. As indicated above, the universality and centrality Professor Brass claims for elites and their competition in the formation of ethnic identities and mobilisation of ethnic 'groups' is not equally evident in the various case-studies of the book. Neither do these several accounts support equally the unfortunate and one-sided definition of the seminar topic as 'the role of the state and of government policy in the formation and/or decline of ethnic identities in multi-ethnic societies'. Rather, the accounts of Africa in general and of South Africa in particular demonstrate the salient roles of ethnicity and race in the genesis and structure of states; as likewise do the chapters on Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, on Spain, Yugoslavia, on the juridical relations of the United States and Amerindians, and – despite Maureen Covell's interpretation – the relations between Flemings and Walloons in Belgium from its beginnings as well.

It is also unfortunate that such terms as elites, ethnic identity, ethnic group or category are neither adequately defined nor consistently employed in constructing the 'elite competition theory'. The same criticism also holds for such key concepts as the state, government, objectivity and subjectivity in that chapter, and even to the criteria of the political in Kemal Karpat's excellent essay (102–5). Nonetheless, given a broader definition of the problem that focusses attention on the reciprocal influences of ethnicity and political forms, statelike or other, on the emergence, organisation and development of one another, much that Paul Brass and Crawford Young argue in their chapters merits attention for the enquiries that they suggest.

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