Prasenjit Duara

Bom in Assam, India, Prasenjit Duara's educational and professional odyssey took him from undergraduate training at St. Stephens College in Delhi, to the doctoral program at Harvard, teaching at George Mason University and Stanford University, to his current position at the University of Chicago. A specialist in modern Chinese history, Duara's first book was the prizewinning *Culture, Power and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942* (Stanford Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1988), which has been translated into both Chinese and Japanese. This essay reprises ideas from *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modem China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). His current work, on the period of Japanese rule in Manchuria, the time of the ''last emperor,'' attempts to illuminate the fatal embrace between Japanese colonialist discourse and Chinese nationalism. Duara explores the contesting discourses of the nation, particularly the intersections of language and the competing visions of political communites. Borrowing from the work of deconstructionists, he is concerned with the silences and repressions that occur in all acts of articulation.

Using the history of China, but also of South Asia and Japan, as his laboratory, Duara contends with the Gellner and Anderson theories of nationalism that locate the nation in modernity and posit a radical disjuncture with premodern political communities. Whatever the importance of print capitalism in European nation-making, in China an intimate relationship between the written and spoken word—the power of pan-Chinese myths, for example, and their incorporation in folk drama—provided a common cultural reservoir from which agrarian peoples gained a sense of identity with a broad cultural and political order. Without eliding the distinctions between modern identities and others, Duara emphasizes the multiplicity of identities at all times and the resemblances between more traditional and national identities.

Two particularly strong conceptualizations of the political community emerged in imperial Chinese society, one the ethnic self-description of the Han people, the other a community based on the cultural values of the elite. In the twentieth century modern discourses of the nation from outside influenced Chinese intellectuals and political actors, who combined them with selective use of existing Chinese ideas of political communality. The emergence of the modem nation-state system also powerfully determined the further elaboration of national discourses and identities as it promoted ethnic loyalty to territory. Rejecting any essentialist view of the nation, Duara proposes to look at national communities as relationships based on inclusions and exclusions and argues that "an incipient nationality is formed when the perception of the boundaries of community are transformed: when soft boundaries are transformed into hard ones." Hardening occurs when a community adopts a master narrative of descent, thus defining more exclusively who belongs and who is outside.

Historicizing National Identity, or Who Imagines What and When

For a long time now nationalism and national identity have been understood within the assumptions of modernization theory. The effort to define nationalism as a quintessentially modern phenomenon in which citizens identify with the nation-state has done much to clarify nationalism. At the same time, however, this effort has tended to fix and objectify what is after all, a subjective, fluid and elusive phenomenon—the meanings of the nation to both citizens and nation-state.[1] In this essay I take a critical historical view of national identity and I explore the phenomenon less in its distinctiveness than in its changing relationships to other visions of political community, both historical and contemporary.

In the problematique of modernization theories, the nation is a unique and unprecedented form of community which finds its place in the oppositions between empire and nation, tradition and modernity, and center and periphery. As the new and sovereign subject of history, the nation embodies a moral force which supersedes dynasties and ruling clerisies, which are seen as merely partial subjects representing only themselves through history. By contrast, the nation is a collective subject—whose ideal periphery exists only outside itself—poised to realize its historical destiny in a modern future.[2] This narrative depicts not only the history of nationalism, but constitutes the master narrative of much modern history, allowing the nation-state to define the framework of its self-understanding. My goal is to take a step in extricating history from this framework and devise a perspective from which it can historicize the nation and national identity itself.

To see the nation as a collective subject of modernity obscures the nature of national identity. I propose instead that we view national identity as founded upon fluid relationships; it thus both resembles and is interchangeable with other political identities. If the dynamics of national identity lie within the same terrain as other political identities, we will need to break with two assumptions of mod-

ernization theory. The first of these is that national identity is a radically novel form of consciousness. Below, we will develop a crucial distinction between the modern nation-state system and nationalism as a form of identification. National identification is never fully subsumed by it and is best considered in its complex relationships to other historical identities. The second assumption is the privileging of the grand narrative of the nation as a collective historical subject. Nationalism is rarely the nationalism of the nation, but rather represents the site where very different views of the nation contest and negotiate with each other. Through these two positions, we will seek to generate a historical understanding of the nation that is neither historically determinist nor essentialist, and through which we might try to recover history itself from the ideology of the nation-state.

The two most influential recent works on the subject of nationalism—by Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner—have stressed the radically novel form of consciousness represented by national identity. Both analysts identify national consciousness conventionally as the coextensiveness of politics and culture—an overriding identification of the individual with a culture that is protected by the state. Both also provide a sociological account of how it was only in the modern era that such a type of consciousness—where people from diverse locales could "imagine" themselves as part of a single community—was made possible. Gellner provides a full account of this discontinuity. Preindustrial society is formed of segmentary communities, each isolated from the other, with an inaccessible high culture jealously guarded by a clerisy—Gellner's general term for literati ruling elites. With the growth of industrialism, society requires a skilled, literate, and mobile work force. The segmentary form of communities is no longer adequate to create a homogenously educated work force in which the individual members are interchangeable. The state comes to be in charge of the nation, and through control of education creates the requisite interchangeability of individuals. The primary identification with segmentary communities is transferred to the nation-state (1983). In Anderson's view, the spread of print media through the capitalist market made possible a unity without the mediation of a clerisy. Print capitalism permitted an unprecedented mode of apprehending time that was "empty" and "homogenous"—expressed in an ability to imagine the simultaneous existence of one's co-nationals (1983).

I believe that this claim of a radical disjuncture is exaggerated. The long history of complex civilizations such as that of China does not fit the picture of isolated communities and a vertically separate but unified clerisy. Scholars have filled many pages writing about complex networks of trade, pilgrimage, migration, and sojourning that linked villages to wider communities and political structures. This was the case as well in Tokugawa Japan and eighteenth-century India (Bayly 1983; Habib 1963). Moreover, even if the reach of the bureaucratic state was limited, recently developed notions of the culture-state[3] indicate the widespread presence of common cultural ideas which linked the state to communities and sustained the polity.

It was not only, or perhaps even primarily, the print media that enabled Han Chinese to develop a sharp sense of the Other, and hence of themselves as a community, when they confronted other communities. The exclusive emphasis

on print capitalism as enabling the imagining of a common destiny and the concept of simultaneity ignores the complex relationship between the written and spoken word. In agrarian civilizations this interrelationship furnishes an extremely rich and subtle context for communication across the culture. For instance, in pan-Chinese myths, such as that of Guandi, the god of war, not only were oral and written traditions thoroughly intertwined, but the myth provided a medium whereby different groups could announce their participation in a national culture even as they inscribed their own interpretation of the myth (through the written and other cultural media, such as folk drama and iconography) (Duara 1988b). As such, these groups were articulating their understanding of the wider cultural and political order from their own particular perspective. There were large numbers of people in agrarian societies who were conscious of their culture and identity at multiple levels, and in that sense were perhaps not nearly so different from their modern counterparts.

The point is not so much that national identity existed in premodern times; rather it is that the manner in which we have conceptualized political identities is fundamentally problematic. In privileging modern society as the only social form capable of generating political self-awareness, Gellner and Anderson regard national identity as a distinctive mode of consciousness: the nation as a whole imagining itself to be the unified subject of history. There is a special and restricted sense in which we can think of a unified subjectivity; we shall have occasion below to review it in our discussion of nationalism as a relational identity. But this restricted sense of unity is not unique to modern society.[4] The deeper error, however, lies in the general postulate of a cohesive subjectivity.

Individuals and groups in both modern and agrarian societies identify simultaneously with several communities that are all imagined; these identifications are historically changeable, and often conflicted internally and with each other. As we shall see in the following section, Chinese people historically identified with different types of communities, and when these identifications became politicized they came to resemble national identities. To be sure, this does not validate the claim of some nationalists that the nation had existed historically as a cohesive subject gathering self-awareness and poised to realize its destiny in the modern era. Premodern political identifications do not necessarily or Ideologically develop into the national identifications of modern times. A new vocabulary and a political system selects, adapts, reorganizes and even re-creates these older identities. Nonetheless, the fact remains that modern societies are not the only ones capable of creating self-conscious political communities.

The dominant historiography of modern China in the West has also preferred to see nationalism in China as a purely modem phenomenon. Joseph Levenson observed a radical discontinuity between a nationalistic identity which he believed came to Chinese intellectuals around the turn of the twentieth century, and earlier forms of Chinese identity. The high culture, ideology and identification of the mandarin, he believed, were principally forms of cultural consciousness, an identification with the moral goals and values of a universalizing civilization. Thus the significant transition here is from a "culturalism" to a nationalism, to the awareness of the nation-state as the ultimate goal of the community (Levenson

1964). Culturalism referred to a natural conviction of cultural superiority that sought no legitimation or defense outside of the culture itself. Only when, according to Levenson, cultural values sought legitimation in the face of the challenge posed by the Other in the late nineteenth century, do we begin to see "decaying culturalism" and its rapid transformation to nationalism—or to a culture protected by the state (politicization of culture).

It is very hard to distinguish "culturalism" as a distinct form of identification from ethnic or national identification. In order for it to exist as a pure expression of cultural superiority, it would have to feel no threat from an Other seeking to obliterate these values. In fact, this threat arose historically on several occasions and produced several reactions from the Chinese literati and populace. First, there was a rejection of the universalist pretensions of Chinese culture and of the principle that separated culture from politics and the state. This manifested itself in a form of ethnocentrism that we will consider in a moment. A second, more subtle, response involved the transformation of cultural universalism from a set of substantive moral claims into a relatively abstract official doctrine. This doctrine was often used to conceal the compromises that the elite and the imperial state had to make in their ability to practice these values or to conceal their inability to make people who should have been participating in the cultural-moral order actually do so.

Consider the second reaction first. The Jin and Mongol invasions of North China during the twelfth century and their scant respect for Chinese culture produced an ideological defensiveness in the face of the relativization of the conception of the universal empire *(tianxia)*. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Confucian universalists could only maintain their universalism by performing two sleights of hand: connecting individuals to the infinite (severing theory from fact) and internalizing the determination of personal values, both of which represented a considerable departure from the traditional Confucian concern with an objective-moral order (Trauzettel 1975). During the Ming dynasty, the Han Chinese dynasty that succeeded the Mongols, Chinese historians dealt with the lack of fit with the Chinese worldview simply by maintaining a silence (Wang 1968, 45-46). When we look at the tribute trade system which is often cited as the paradigmatic expression of its universalistic claims to moral superiority, the imperial state adapted readily to the practical power politics of the day. In the early nineteenth century, the tiny northwestern khanate of Kokand (like the Jesuits, the Russians, and several others before)successfully challenged the Qing tribute system and had established all but the formal declaration of equality with the Chinese empire. The Qing was forced into a negotiated settlement but it continued to use the language of universalism—civilizing values radiating from the son of heaven—to conceal the altered power relations between the two (Fletcher 1978b).

Thus the universalistic claims of Chinese imperial culture constantly adapted to alternative views of the world order which it tended to cover with the rhetoric of universalism: this was its defensive strategy. It seems evident that when the universalistic claims of this culture were repeatedly compromised and efforts were made to conceal these compromises, advocates of this universalism were operating within the tacit idea of a *Chinese* universalism—which is of course none

other than a hidden form of relativism. We have tended to accept Chinese declarations of universalism at face value far more readily than we do other official doctrines (perhaps because it plays a crucial role as the Other in interpretations of the encounter with the nation-states of the west).

Viewing "culturalism" (or universalism) as a "Chinese culturalism" is to see it not as a form of cultural consciousness per se, but rather to see culture—a specific culture of the imperial state and Confucian orthodoxy—as a criterion defining a community. Membership in this community was defined by participation in a ritual order which embodied allegiance to Chinese ideas and ethics centered on the Chinese emperor. While this conception of political community may seem rather distant from nationalism, one should consider the fact that the territorial boundaries and peoples of the contemporary Chinese nation correspond roughly to the Qing empire that was held together ideologically precisely by these ritual practices. A look at the ideas of Confucian modernizers writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as Kang Youwei and Zhang Zhitong, reveal that the national community they had in mind was constituted by Confucian cultural principles that would include ethnically non-Han peoples—such as the Manchus—as long as they had accepted (Chinese) cultural principles. This was, of course, challenged by the revolutionaries of 1911, who saw nationhood as based on inherited "racialist" (or ethnocentric), not cultural traits. However, it is important to note that after the 1911 revolution, the revolutionaries themselves reverted to the boundaries of the Qing empire to bound their nation; m'oreover, the Communist version of the nation builds upon a conception grounded in the imperial idea of political community.

Just as significantly, during the Jin invasion of the twelfth century, segments of the scholar class completely abandoned the concentric, radiant concept of universal empire for a circumscribed notion of the Han community and fatherland *(guo)* in which the barbarians had no place. This ethnocentric notion of Chineseness was, of course, not new. Chinese authors typically trace it to a quotation from the Zuo Zhuan: "the hearts of those who are not of our race must be different" (Li Guoqi 1970, 20; Dow 1982, 353). Others (Yang 1968; Langlois 1980, 362) find it still earlier in the concentric realm of inner and outer barbarians found in the Shang Shu: pacific cultural activities were to prevail in the inner part, whose inhabitants were not characterized as ethnically different, with militancy toward the outer barbarians, who appeared to be unassimilable. Trauzettel believes that in the Song dynasty, this ethnocentrism brought together state and people. The state sought to cultivate the notion of loyalty to the fatherland downward into peasant communities, from among whom arose resistance against the Jin in the name of the Chinese culture and the Song dynasty (1975).

While we see the ethnic nation most clearly in the Song, its most explicit advocate in the late Imperial period was Wang Fuzhi. Wang likened the differences between Manchus and Han to that between jade and snow, which are both white but different in nature, or more ominously, between a horse and a man of the same color whose natures are obviously different (Li Guoqi 1970, 22). To be sure, it was the possession of civilization *(wen)* by the Han that distinguished them from the barbarians, but it did not keep Wang from the view that''it is not

inhumane to annihilate [the barbarians]... because faithfulness and righteousness are the ways of human intercourse and are not to be extended to alien kinds *[i-lei (yilei)]"* (in Langlois 1980, 364). Although Wang may have espoused the most extreme view of his generation, several prominent scholars of the Ming-Qing transition era held on to the idea of the fundamental unassimilability of the *yi* (barbarian) by the *Hua* (Chinese) (see Onogawa 1970, 207-21; and Wu Wei-to 1970, 261-71).

Despite the undoubted success with which the Qing made themselves accept-able as the legitimate sons of heaven, they were unable to completely suppress the ethnocentric opposition to their rule either at a popular level or among the scholarly elite. The anti-Manchu writings of Wang Fuzhi, Huang Zongxi, and Gu Yanwu during the early period of Qing rule together with collections of stories of Manchu atrocities during the time (for example, Mingji Yeshi's *Unofficial History of the Late Ming)* were in circulation even before the middle of the nineteenth century (Wu Wei-to 1970, 263). Zhang Binglin, for instance, claims to having been nourished by a tradition both in his family and in wider Zhejiang society which held that the defense of the Han against the barbarians *(Yi Xia)* was as important as the righteousness of a ruler (Onogawa 1970, 216). Certainly Han ethnic consciousness seems to have reached a height by the late eighteenth cen-tury, when the dominant Han majority confronted the non-Han minorities of China in greater numbers than ever before over competition for increasingly scarce resources (Naquin and Rawski 1987). Thus it is hardly surprising to find that, from at least the time of resistance to the increased foreign presence in South China after the Opium Wars through to the Boxer Rebellion of 1898-1900, there existed a general expectation, not only among the elite, but also among the pop-ulace, that the state would protect the culture and the people of the empire (Wak-eman 1966; Esherick 1987). Though this identification may not have affected every segment of the population, French peasants, too, had little conception of the nation until the end of the nineteenth century, as Eugen Weber has reminded us (Weber 1978).

We are able to discern at least two conceptualizations of the political com-munity in imperial Chinese society: the exclusive ethnic-based one founded on a self-description of a people as Han, and a community based on the cultural values and doctrines of a Chinese elite. What has been described as culturalism is a statement of Chinese values as superior but, significantly, not exclusive. Through a process of education and imitation, barbarians could also become part of a community sharing common values and distinguishing themselves from yet other barbarians who did not share these values. In these terms, culturalism is not significantly different from ethnicity, because like ethnic groups, it defines the distinguishing marks and boundaries of a community. The difference lies in the criterion of admissibility: the ethnocentric conception refused to accept anyone not born into the community, despite their educability into Chinese values, as part of the political community; whereas, the cultural conception did.

During the years before the republican revolution of 1911, when modern na-tionalism took hold among the Chinese intelligentsia, the debates between them about the nature of the future Chinese nation were shaped as much by modern

discourses of the nation-state (see below) as by the historical principles involved in defining community that we have traced above. The constitutional monarchists, represented by Kang Youwei, inherited the Confucian culturalist notion of com-munity. Although Kang was influenced by modern Western ideas, the conception of political community that he retained drew on culturalist Confucian notions. We see this in his lifelong devotion to the emperor (Protect the Emperor Society), which in the political context of the time meant more than a nostalgia for mon-archy. Since the monarchs were Manchu and not Han, it implied that he was convinced that community was composed of people with shared culture and not restricted to a race or ethnic group (imputed or otherwise).

The revolutionaries, such as Zhang Binglin and Wang Jingwei, articulated their opposition to this conception by drawing on the old ethnocentric tradition that acquired new meaning in the highly charged atmosphere of the 1900s. To be sure, Zhang was a complex figure whose thought can scarcely be reduced to any single strain. But he and his associate Zou Rong succeeded in articulating an image of the new community that was persuasive to many in his generation. At the base of this reformulation of the old ethnocentrism was a dialectical reading of Wang Fuzhi's notions of evolutionism plus a new Social Darwinist conception of the survival of the fittest races. The complex architecture of Zhang's ideas of the nation seems as much to use modern ideas to justify an ethnocentric celebration of the Han as it was a selective use of the past to ground the present. Modern nationalists like Kang and Zhang were each engaged in dialogues with disputed legacies which were, nonetheless, authentic and by no means completely assim-ilable by modern discourses.

NATIONS, NATION-STATES AND AMBIVALENCE TOWARD ANTIQUITY

What is novel about modern nationalism is not political self-consciousness, but the world *system* of nation-states. This system, which has become globalized in the last hundred years or so, sanctions the nation-state as the only legitimate form of polity. It is a political form with distinct territorial boundaries within which the sovereign state, "representing" the nation-people, has steadily expanded its role and power. The ideology of the nation-state system has sanctioned the pen-etration of state power into areas that were once dominated by local authority structures. For instance,' 'children" have come increasingly under the jurisdiction of the state as the institutional rules governing childhood were diffused to all types of nation-states over the last hundred years (Meyer and Boli-Bennet, 1978; Meyer 1980). The term *nationalism* is often confused with the ideology of the nation-state, which seeks to fix or privilege political identification at the level of the nation-state. The slippage in this relationship is a principal source of the instability of the meaning of the nation.

The lineage of the sovereign territorial conception may be traced to what Wil-liam McNeil! has characterized as the system of competitive European states. From as far back as A.D. 1000, each of these states was driven by the urge to

increase its resources, population, and military technology over the others. In their competition, these states gradually became dependent on capital markets, both externally and internally, which further propelled the development of their economy and the competition between them (McNeill 1982). In time, the Church came to sanction some of these emergent regional states by endowing them with a theory of sovereignty without at the same time obliging them to achieve universalizing empire. This was possible because of the separation of spiritual and temporal authority, or, in other words, the source of legitimacy from actual exercise of power (Armstrong 1982). The culmination of this conception of the nation was first seen in the French Revolution and exemplified in the idea of citizenship for all within the territory (Eley 1981).

Elsewhere in the world, competition was never institutionalized in the same way. For instance, in China during the many periods of interdynastic struggles, the divisions of the empire were brought to an end by a victor who established a command polity that squelched the dynamic of competition among states. Similarly, although regional successor states emerged from the disintegration of the Mogul empire in eighteenth-century India, the competition between them was not institutionalized in the same way. Moreover, from the point of view of sovereignty, legitimacy in China necessarily resided in the imperial center, in the Son of Heaven, and thus regional states were never able to claim any durable sovereign status. Likewise, the most powerful successor state of the Moguls, the Hindu Marathas, strove not for territorial sovereignty but towards the Brahmin ideal of a universal ruler (Embree 1985, 32).

However, no contemporary state is a nation exclusively in this territorial sense. Even among the early modern European states, European dynasts had to combine the theory of territorial sovereignty with ethnicity to create modern nation-states (Armstrong 1982). While most historical nations, defined as self-aware and even politicized communities, lacked the conception of themselves as part of a system of territorially sovereign nation-states, modern nations embody both territorial and ethnic conceptions. Of course, it may legitimately be asked to what extent the (modern) nation-state system influences the political identities of its citizens. As Balibar (1990) points out, the nation-state has doubtless developed the ability to have territorial boundaries acquire a salience and have its citizens develop powerful attachments to these boundaries. Yet, even these territorial identifications have to come to terms with historical understandings as we have seen in China in the case of the republican revolutionaries. More generally, territorial identifications have to bear some relationship to an inherited sense of the "homeland"—even if this sense is a highly contested one.

Thus the shape and content of national identities in the modern era are a product of negotiation with historical identities within the framework of a modern nation-state system. From this vantage point the efforts by scholars—from Kedourie to Gellner—to vociferously debunk nationalist historiography for assuming an ancient history of the nation (the nation as a continuous subject gathering self-awareness) seems misdirected because it neglects the important fact that nationalists always have to engage with their many histories, even when they are manipulating them for their own purposes. It is also misplaced because it slights

the strong contrary urge within nationalism to see itself as a modern phenomenon. While on the one hand, nationalist leaders and nation-states glorify the ancient or eternal character of the nation, they simultaneously seek to emphasize the unprecedented novelty of the nation-state, because it is only in this form that the people have been able to realize themselves as the subjects or masters of their history. The fact that the nation-state *represents* this subjecthood is, of course, maintained parenthetically.

There is thus a built-in ambivalence in modern nationalist ideology toward the historicality of the nation. This ambivalence presents us with a window to view history, not as something merely made up, but as the site of contestation and repression of different views of the nation. In the writings of Sun Yat-sen, the ambiguity is concealed through a political attack on his enemies. Sun argues that China, which for him is the Han nation, was the world's most perfectly formed nation because the people were bound together by all the five criteria that (for him) it took to form a nation: blood/race, language, custom, religion, and livelihood. At the same time, Sun is unclear on whether the nation is already fully awakened or whether national consciousness needs to be further aroused. He is torn between these options because on the one hand nationalists like himself could fulfill their mission only if the Han people still suffered from a "slave mentality" with no national consciousness. On the other hand, the preexisting fullness of China as a nation was necessary for the legitimacy of any nationalist rhetoric. Initially, Sun maintained both positions by arguing that the awakening was also a reawakening. There had been difficult historical periods when the Han people had risen to the occasion and revealed the fullness of their national being, as during Han resistance to the Jurchens or the Mongols. Ultimately, however, Sun concealed this ambiguity by transforming it into a problem inherent in Confucian cosmopolitanism: the original spirit of Han independence had been weakened by the cosmopolitanism which accepted alien rulers like the present Manchu regime as rulers of the Chinese people. This was, of course, precisely the cosmopolitanism advocated by his reformer enemies who advocated a China composed of all of the ethnic groups of the old empire. Sun and the republican revolutionaries sought to mobilize a particular history not only to serve as the foundation of the new nation-state, but to delegitimate the ideological core of the alternative territorial and culturalist conception of the nation (Sun 1986, 41-2).[5]

The ambivalence between the old and new is similarly contained by a narrative of a reawakening subject in Jawaharlal Nehru's history of India. Moreover, Nehru's historical narrative also embeds a challenge to the Hindu-dominated nationalist historiography of the time (Prakash 1990, 389). The historical unity of India for Nehru lay in the actual historical development of the nation. The high points of Indian history were the reigns of Asoka, the Guptas, the Muslim emperor Akbar and the Moguls—all of whom attempted to develop a political framework to unite the cultural diversity of the Subcontinent. Nehru saw civilizations and nations in the organic metaphor of growth and decline. The great heights of Indian thought, culture, and science had been reached as early as the eleventh century and subsequently entered a long dark period of rigidity and stagnation (Nehru 1960,121-28). To be sure, there were short cycles of creativity thereafter, especially during

the reign of Akbar, but the modern period had been dominated by the vigor and dynamism of the Europeans. It remained for the national movement in India to realize the greatness of the Indian nation once again. However, the purpose of Nehru's narrative is exactly the opposite of Sun's. Whereas Sun's political strategy (at least in the period before the 1911 revolution) involved a specification—a narrowing—of the Chinese nation to the Han, Nehru was striving to build an Indian nation that was not exclusively Hindu. In doing so, Nehru's history created the founding narrative of the secular modern nation-state. While this narrative has managed to withstand attacks in academic and official historiography, it is today being contested as never before in the realm of popular history—in the conflict over temples and mosques.

In Israel, as in India, the historical narrative is unable to contain the tension between those who would emphasize the ancient and pristine essence of the nation and those who stress the new and the modern. The conflict in Israel between the religious Right, for whom the meaning of the nation is embodied in the sacred books, and the more secular nationalists, who seek to project the nation along a progressive vision, can be traced to the founding moment of the nation. The Handelmans have examined the conflict over the choice of the emblem on the Israeli flag in the course of 1948. "The emerging national culture of Israeli Jews tended to be secular, yet rooted in ancient Israel, and so again intertwined with religion. Therefore the symbolism had to include the symbolism of the ancient that would be understood clearly as a source of secular culture" (Handelman and Shamgar-Handleman, 216). But this was a heavy ambiguity for the emblem to bear and it flared into an open conflict between the Zionist religious parties and the primarily secular ones. The religious parties wished to use the menorah, which is identified with the birth of the Israelites as a nation, the Temple cult, and statehood, blessed by the divine. The secularists wished to combine the symbolism of the menorah with that of the seven stars—the seven hours of the workday symbolizing the rationalization of labor and social benefits and, more widely, the values of the Enlightenment. This metaphor rapidly came under scathing attack by the religious parties and the resulting official emblem of Israel, the Titus menorah, "synthesized time (the last Jewish state), place (Jersualem, Israel), the Jewish people, and the qualities of the primordial and eternal. But the ratified emblem contained no motif of the innovative aspirations of modern Zionism for the future" (219-20)[6]

The ambivalence about the historicality of the nation reveals a fundamental aporia for nationalists: if the people-nation has always been present historically then on what grounds can the present nation-state make a special claim to legitimacy as the first embodiment of the people-nation' We have seen that nationalists have been able to address this ambiguity through a variety of rhetorical strategies, but they have not been able to fully control the meaning of the nation's history. The real signifigance of this aporia lie in the possibilities it generates for contested meanings of the nation. Modernist and postmodernist understandings of the nation tend to view history epiphenomenally—as the space for forgetting and re-creating in accordance with present needs. A more complex view of history suggests that

if the past is shaped by the present, the present is also shaped by the past as inheritance, and the most fertile questions lie in understanding how this dialectic is articulated with the contest over the significance of national history.

IMAGINED NATIONS: WHO IMAGINES WHAT?

While the modem nation-state system clearly influences national identity—especially in its efforts to confine loyalty to a territory—the latter is by no means determined by the former. In order to understand national identity more fully, it needs to be studied in relation to other identities, as part of the generalized category of political identity; this is its true terrain. When considered in this terrain we can see how the ambiguities, the changeability, the fungibility and interplay of national identity with other forms of identification can be as subversive of the nation-state as it is supportive. And within this terrain we can ask if national identification is as privileged over others as the nation-state and nationalist leaders like to suggest.

Ever since Karl Deutsch, analysts of nationalism have emphasized how the nation-state, in the print era and after, has been able to avail of the proliferating mass media to facilitate the nation-building project. Few have emphasized how this same technology also enables rivals of the nascent nation-state to construct alternative forms of political and even national identity, whether in Breton, the Baltic states, Tibet or the Punjab. The state is never able to eliminate alternative constructions of the nation among both old and new communities. The most successful states are able to contain these conceptions within relatively depoliticized spaces; but even where such states are older, as in western Europe, there are overt challenges to the established national form in almost every nation. Walker Connor (1972) has shown us that there is scarcely a nation in the world—developed or underdeveloped—where ethnic mobilization has not challenged the nation-state. Defying the presumption of the nation-state to restrict the term ''nationalism'' to loyalty to itself, Connor insists on identifying these self-differentiating ethnic groups as in fact nations.

Connor's identification of nationalism? within the nation-state reveals the conflicted but isomorphic nature of political identities: ethnic mobilization develops into national identification identical to the one it opposes. But the relationship among different identities is more complex than this. Nationalism is often considered to override other forms of identification within a society, such as religious, racial, linguistic, class, gender, or even historical ones—to encompass these differences in a larger identity. I shall have more to say about the model of nested identities implicit in this understanding in the next section; here I would like to suggest that even when or where such an encompassment has been temporarily achieved, the way in which the nation is imagined, viewed, and voiced by different self-conscious groups can indeed be very different. Indeed we may speak of different "nation-views," as we do "world-views," which are not overriden by the nation, but actually define or constitute it. In place of the harmonized,

monologic voice of the Nation, we find a polyphony of voices, overlapping and criss-crossing; contradictory and ambiguous; opposing, affirming, and negotiating their views of the nation.

Moreover, the shaping of identities is also historically changeable. The thesis that modernization leads to nationalism can hardly be sustained anymore. Developed nations have seen the birth of separatist identities where one might least expect to find them. Of the history of the relationship of the Ulster Irish, the Welsh, and the Scots to Britishness, historically the Scots may have had the weakest cultural basis for a separatist identity. Yet the circumstances of the 1960s and 1970s gave rise to a resurgent Scottish nationalism (Breuilly 1982, 280-90; Agnew 1987, 143-59). Areas of India are well known for separatist movements in recent years. What is less well known, however, is that the nationalist movement under Indian National Congress leadership against the British Raj was among the strongest in some of these same areas, such as Assam. Below, we will see how identities of groups in China, such as the Manchus, Hakka Chinese, and Subei folk in Shanghai, and their relationship to Chineseness fluctuated over the last two centuries.

National identities are unstable not only because they are susceptible to splits, whether by alternative criteria of identity formation (for example religion rather than language) or by the transference of loyalty to a subgroup (even where the identity of this subgroup is new), but also because all good nationalisms have a transnational vision—witness pan-Africanism, pan-Asianism, pan-Europeanism, pan-Islamism, Shiism, Judaism. To be sure, the manner in which territorial nationalism negotiates its relations with the wider identification takes many forms. Some arguments for national identification find their legitimation in the ultimate achievement of a transcendent order. For instance the reformist nationalism of Kang Youwei justified nationalism as a necessary stage in the ultimate achievement of the "great unity" of all peoples of the world *(datong). Datong* was also an ideal that Sun Yat-sen would later celebrate when he linked the destiny of China to that of the oppressed peoples of the world. In Iran, the criterion that came to determine nationality historically had been the Persian language, first in the post-Hellenic Persian revival of Ardashir I in A.D. 224 and then in the flowering of Persian literature under the Arab conquests. The great achievement of the latter period was the Shahnamah of Firdawsi (A.D. 941-1020) in which the poet created an idealized history of pre-Islamic Iran by deliberately avoiding Arabic words as far as possible. Subsequently in the sixteenth century under the Safavis, Iranian distinctiveness came to be expressed through Shiism rather than language, as Iran became a ''bastion of militant Shiism surrounded by hostile Sunni neighbors …. A fortress mentality, a we and they dichotomy, gradually developed ...'' (Weryho 1986, 52). The nationalism of the present regime of the ayatollahs is composed of an exclusivist ideology formed by both Persian and Shiite myths, but it is clear that Shiism, while promoting national greatness, also obliges it to a transnational ideal (Bernard and Khalilzad, 1984).

Even in Japan, where one might most expect a perfect congruence between loyalty and territory and least expect any external sanctions for nationalist ideology, pan-Asianism and the idea that Japan derived its special position by pro-

tecting other Asian nations from the corrupting influence of Western capitalism bolstered Japanese national identity. To be sure, pan-Asianism also worked nicely to promote Japanese imperialism in Asia, but it would be wrong to see only this dimension. Marius Jansen has written persuasively of the pan-Asianism of Miyazaki Torazo, Oi Kentaro and others who inspired Sun Yat-sen and others with their zeal to destroy Western imperialism. "A re-birth for oppressed peasantries elsewhere in Asia was, for them, a necessary adjunct and stimulus to ameliorating the peasants' lot in Japan" (Jansen 1967, 219).

In Europe today, we see the contradictoriness of political identifications in full flower. Resurgent nationalism has surfaced in tandem with the near-realization of a transnational dream—often in a single country like Germany. Whatever the shape of the European community, it is likely that it will have to incorporate some of the functions and symbols of the nation-state. Etienne Balibar wonders whether in the building of the fictive ethnicity of Europe the tendency will be predominantly toward developing a European co-lingualism or in idealizing a ''European demographic identity" conceived mainly in opposition to Turks, Arabs, blacks, and other "southern populations" (Balibar 1990, 359). Depending on how these boundaries are drawn, the consequences for the "Other" will be significantly different in each case.

The multiplicity of nation-views and the idea that political identity is not fixed but shifts between different loci introduces the idea that nationalism is best seen as a relational identity. In other words, the nation, even where it is manifestly not a recent invention, is hardly the realization of an original essence, but a historical configuration which is designed to include certain groups and exclude or marginalize others—often violently. (Linguistic definitions obviously exclude and marginalize different groups from those who seek to define nations by religious or racialist criteria or the criterion of common historical experience.) As a relationship among constituents, the national "self is defined at any point in time by the Other. Depending on the nature and scale of the oppositional term, the national self contains various smaller "Others"—historical Others that have effected an often uneasy reconciliation among themselves and potential Others that are beginning to form their differences. And it is these potential Others that are most deserving of our attention because they reveal the performative principle that create nations—the willing into existence of a nation which will choose to privilege its difference and obscure all of the cultural bonds that had tied it to its sociological kin.

The most easily identifiable expressions of nationalism as a *relationship* are the antiimperialist movements the world over. Sun Yat-sen and other Chinese nationalists believed that it was in the self-interest of Chinese minorities to join with the Han majority against the imperialists during the war-ravaged republic because of the security in numbers. When the imperialist threat faded, it became easy for these minorities to perceive the threat from precisely the numbers of the Han majority. The pulling apart of eastern European nation-states in recent times represents the most dramatic indication that the conditions holding one type of nation together no longer prevail. What is just as important to note are the sub-nationalisms within Lithuania or Georgia as expressions of the great unraveling

of our times. Canada is noteworthy not only because of Quebecois nationalism, but also because of the way in which the nation of Quebec might be challenged by a hidden Other, such as the Mohawks. The hidden Others are not only other groups but alternative principles of grouping as well. Consider the chameleonlike identities in western Asia, where a different configuration is invoked depending on whether the threat is directed against Arab nationalism, religious nationalism, or territorial nationalism.

I do not believe that the goal of the historian is simply to celebrate ''difference.'' Rather, the fact that individuals and groups simultaneously recognize themselves in and respond to different ideologies and cultures suggests a critical power in society that is potentially resistant to totalizing ideologies. Historians have traditionally been concerned with the process whereby national identities are formed and have neglected to see that it is the same process whereby other identifications and nation-views are repressed and obscured. In the next segment I will try to show how the historian, by being able to take the long view, is uniquely situated to provide a complex accounting of the formation as well as the repression of nation-views and national identities.

THE ANALYTICS OF COMMUNITY CLOSURE

Identity and Meaning

While it is important to grasp nationalism as a contingent relationship, we also need to understand the mechanisms whereby this relationship or coalition endows itself with the mystique of a unitary or cohesive nation. Here we will attend to the procedures whereby a history is mobilized to produce "the national identity." It is important to recognize that while the discourses of the nation-state system importantly shape the meaning of the nation, the social process of community closure that we will examine here is hardly unique to the modern nation.

Social science explanations of political identity—ethnic and national—have centered on the debate over whether these are primordial or instrumentalist. Neither has much use for historical process since the primordialists simply assume an essential, unchanging identity whereas the instrumentalists, who usually attribute the creation of such identities to manipulation by interested elites or others, often find the past to be irrelevant. What remains unclear in the instrumentalist view is what it is that is being manipulated. More recently, the instrumentalist position is being revisited by scholars influenced by post-structuralism and discourse analysis who are extremely suspicous of historicist or even historical explanations, preferring to see identities as ''constructed'' by the discourses of the era. While I am partial to the view that discourses construct their subjects, yet this view, I believe, must be modified to acknowledge that there are multiple representations, including historical ones, which construct identities. Thus while a national identity may be invented, its formulators are typically able to build it

around, or from among, preconstituted and resonant representations of community, as much as by destroying or obscuring other representations.

Consider the subtle relationship between identity and meaning in the processes by which nationalisms and nation-views are formed and repressed, negotiated and delegitimated. The argument is often made about nationalism that while one can have different ideas, or respond to different representations, of the nation, the sense of identification with the nation overrides the difference. It is doubtless true that there are times when one simply *feels* American or Chinese, and indeed, when faced with a common outside threat, differences about what it means to be an American or Chinese are often temporarily submerged. This is what we have meant by nationalism as a relational identity. But the strength of the feeling for the nation—which is also exactly what passionately divides fellow-nationals—derives from what it *means* to be American or Chinese. Identities are forged in a fluid complex of cultural signifiers: symbols, practices, and narratives. The process of community closure is the process of fixing certain signifiers within this fluid complex and authorizing them to mobilize the affective strength of the others.

For analytical purposes, I will separate "meaning"—what the nation means to the people—into two areas: (1) discursive meaning and (2) symbolic meaning. In the first realm, I include such subjects as language-as-rhetoric, narratives, and ideology—subjects that have traditionally fallen under the scope of the intellectual historian. In this sense, the nation is a product of the rhetoric and ideas of historians, nationalist intellectuals and pamphleteers. In the realm of symbolic meaning, I include the ensemble of cultural practices of a group such as rituals, festivals, kinship forms, culinary habits, etc.—subjects traditionally of the social historian or anthropologist. In this sense, the nation is an embodiment of the cultural marks of its distinctiveness. While, of course, the two realms are inseparable in the way the nation is imagined by the people, it is useful for the historian to be able to separate and subsequently recombine them in order to better conceive the formation/repression process.

In the discursive realm, the meanings of the nation are produced mainly through linguistic mechanisms. These are the narratives (Bhabha 1990), the signifying chains of metaphors, metonyms, and binary oppositions that give meaning to the nation.[7]

These include not only historical narratives of individual nations such as those of India by Jawaharlal Nehru and of China by Sun Yat-sen, but also global discourses with which these particular narratives have to engage. One such discourse by which early twentieth-century Chinese nationalists constructed their understanding of modern nations and the nation-state system was the language of evolutionary ranking and competition embodied in Social Darwinism. It was a discourse in which the meaning of a "civilized" nation derived from the model of Western nation-states. This discourse was both countered and intertwined with the language of "culture" as the irreducible core or essence of the nation. Redolent of Herder's romantic opposition to the inexorable evolutionism of "rational civilization," nationalist intellectuals in China, India, Japan, and elsewhere de-

veloped East-versus-West/spiritual-versus-material binaries in which they located an irreducible national essence which offered them limited space to resist History.

Even when Social Darwinism in China and elsewhere was overtaken in the 1920s by the antiimperialist rhetoric of victimization and redemption, the notion of culture continued its journey into this language of *ressentiment.* Thus the writings of Sun Yat-sen in the 1920s indicated that it was not enough for China to aspire to the goal of an industrial civilization. China would fulfill its "sacred mission" by supporting weak and small nations and resisting strong world powers. It would do so by transcending Western goals of materialism and violence and seek to realize its own cultural destiny in the way of the sage kings *(wanq dao)* of ancient China (Sun 1924, 631-36, 659). More than in China, perhaps more than anywhere else in the world, the language of redemption was developed in the hands of Gandhi, for whom the Western nation-states had no place among civilizations—which he believed were defined principally by their moral qualities. Only if the nation was able to fulfill spiritual and moral goals—and India, where according to him these goals had once emerged so brilliantly, was also his test case—could it truly aspire to be a civilized nation.

Whereas scholarship has posed class as the antithesis of nation (the two vying for the role of historical subject in the modern era), we can also see how, through a variety of rhetorical mechanisms, the trope of class and class struggle has given meaning to the nation. Li Dazhao imagined the nation in the language of a class on the international stage: the Chinese people were a national proletariat (within an international proletariat) oppressed by the Western capitalists (Meisner 1967, 188). Certainly, this is not unique to China. Abdullah Laroui speaks of a phase of nationalism which he calls "class nationalism":

> Where, in confrontation with Europe, the fundamentalists oppose a culture (Chinese, Indian, Islamic) and the liberal opposed a nation (Chinese, Turkish, Egyptian, Iranian), the revolutionary opposes a class—one that is often extended to include all the parts of the human race exploited by the European bourgeoisie. One may refer to it as class nationalism that nevertheless retains many of the motifs of political and cultural nationalisms; hence the difficulties experienced by many of the analysts who have attempted to define it. (quoted in Fitzgerald 1988, 10)

The class-nation of the international arena also has a domestic expression. In this conception, the supposed attributes of a class are extended to the nation, and the measure to which one fulfilled this criterion ideally governed admissibility to the national community. This is true in the case of Chinese Communism, especially during the Cultural Revolution, when the goal was to purge or disenfranchise undesirable classes in the nation and strive to shape the nation in the image of the idealized proletariat. Here the idea of the nation becomes the site of a tension between a revolutionary language with its transnational aspirations and the reality of national boundedness. Yet another means whereby the language of revolutionary class struggle comes to define the nation is the process of placing the "universal" theory of class struggle into a national context. The elevation of Mao to the role of supreme theorist (together with Lenin and Stalin) and the creation of the "Chinese model" of revolutionary transformation in the late 1930s

marks the sinification of Marxism in which national distinctiveness became embodied in the particular model of class struggle pioneered by the Chinese. Readers will be reminded of Iranian Shiite clerics who further Iranian nationalism by promoting it as the champion of true Islam.

That the nation is a linguistically *gendered* phenomenon is evident even from the simple fact that its most common signifier is fatherland or motherland. The master metaphor of the nation as family in turn yields a variety of strategies and tactics for incorporating women into the nation. Historically in China, the purity of the woman's body has served both as metaphor and metonymy of the purity of the nation (see Schoppa 1989, for instance). The bodies of Chinese women raped by foreign invaders—Mongol, Manchu, or Japanese—were both symbol and part of the national body violated by these foreigners. However, as Lydia Liu has recently shown, at least some women registered a strong ambivalence, and in the case of the writer Xiao Hong, a rejection of nationalism's in-corporation of women. In Liu's analysis of Xiao Hong's novel *Field of Life and Death,* set in the period of the Japanese occupation of China, nationalism "comes across as a profoundly patriarchal ideology that grants subject-positions to men who fight over territory, possession and the right to dominate. The women in this novel, being themselves possessed by men, do not automatically share the male-centred sense of territory" (Liu 1994, 58). In a deliberate subversion of the trope of the raped woman in nationalist discourse, Xiao Hong's protagonist turns out to have been raped by a Chinese man. "The appropriation of the female body by nationalism is contested relentlessly throughout …. (and) raises poignant questions about what it means to be Chinese/peasant/woman" (Liu 1994, 45).

In most modern nations the family was valorized as embodying national morality. The obligation to educate and "emancipate" women derived from the imperative to produce more efficient mothers who in turn would reproduce, biologically and culturally, "superior" citizens (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989,7-9). Tani Barlow (1985) and Wendy Larsen have revealed that in China there existed among the May 4th generation of cultural iconoclasts another strategy whereby women were incorporated into the modern nation. These radicals sought to absorb women directly as citizens of the nation *(guo)* and thus force them to reject their kin-based gender roles in the family or *jia.* The vitriolic May 4th attack on the family as site of the reproduction of hierarchy in society may have been the reason why the radical intelligentsia found it almost impossible to "identify women's role within the jia as a position from which to initiate a positive retheorization of 'woman' " (Larsen 1991, 11). In doing so, they degendered women (who were to be just like male citizens of the nation), and many important women writers like Ding Ling ultimately abandoned writing about the problem of gender. Nonetheless, Larsen observes a kind of resistance to this mode of incorporation among some women writers as they began to reject " 'nation' as an overarching concept within which to frame 'woman' " (Larsen 1991, 13).

These narratives and rhetorics of the nation—particularly historical narratives that are able to speak to present needs—are only one means of articulating the nation: the discursive means. Of course, for some individuals a historical narrative itself may be sufficiently powerful to command identification even where no other

cultural commonalities exist. This is the case with nonpracticing, nonbelieving Jews who might nonetheless make great sacrifices for the historical narrative that legitimates the present nation-state of Israel. More commonly, the coming into being of a nation is a complex event in which an entire affective, cultural apparatus—the realm of symbolic meaning—is mobilized in the task of forming a distinctive political community. And this mobilization must be performed by, and in accordance with, the narratives we have outlined above. In turn, these narratives derive depth only when they are embodied in a culture. The intellectual historian must don the cap of the social historian.

Thus the manner in which a nation is created is not the result of a natural process of accumulating cultural commonalities. Rather the process reveals the imposition of a historical narrative of descent and/or dissent upon both heterogeneous and related cultural practices. I will permit myself a deconstructive excess and coin the word *discent* to suggest the porosity of these two signifiers. It reveals how the tracing of a history is frequently linked to differentiating the self from an Other. The narrative *of discent* serves as a template by which the cultural cloth will be cut and given shape and meaning. When this narrative is imposed upon cultural materials, the relevant community is formed not primarily by the creation of new cultural forms—or even the invention of tradition—but by transforming the perception of the boundaries of the community. However, this is not only a complex process, it is also fraught with danger. Narratives are necessarily selective processes which repress various historical and contemporary materials as they seek to define a community; these materials are fair game for the spokesmen of those on the outs or on the margins of this definition who will seek to organize them into a counternarrative of mobilization.

HARD AND SOFT BOUNDARIES

An incipient nationality is formed when the perception of the boundaries of community are transformed: when soft boundaries are transformed into hard ones. Every cultural practice or what I have called "symbolic meaning" is a potential boundary marking a community. These boundaries may be either soft or hard. One or more of the cultural practices of a group, such as rituals, language, dialect, music, kinship rules, or culinary habits, may be considered soft boundaries if they identify a group but do not prevent the group from sharing and even adopting, self-consciously or not, the practices of another. Groups with soft boundaries between each other are sometimes so unselfconscious about their differences that they do not view mutual boundary breach as a threat and could eventually even amalgamate into one community. Thus, differences in dietary and religious practices may not prevent the sharing of a range of practices between local Hui Muslim and Han communities. The important point is that they tolerate the sharing of some and the nonsharing of other boundaries.

When a master narrative of *discent*—a discursive meaning—seeks to define and mobilize a community, it usually does so by privileging a particular symbolic meaning (or a set of cultural practices) as the constitutive principle of the com-

munity—such as language, religion, or common historical experience—thereby heightening the self-consciousness of this community in relation to those around it. What occurs, then, is a hardening of boundaries. Not only do communities with hard boundaries privilege their differences, they tend to develop an intolerance and suspicion toward the adoption of the Other's practices and strive to distinguish, in some way or the other, practices that they share. Thus, communities with hard boundaries *will* the differences between them. It will be noted that the hardening of boundaries is by no means restricted to the nation or to the era of the nation-state, but the principle of national formation necessarily involves the closing off of a group whose self-consciousness is sharpened by the celebration of its distinctive culture.

Because the narrative's discursive meaning succeeds in privileging certain symbolic meanings as the constitutive principle of a community, it shapes the composition of the community: who belongs and who does not, who is privileged and who is not. Thus if common history is privileged over language and race (extended kinship), language and race always lie as potential mobilizers of an alternative nation that will distribute its marginals differently. Thus within the hard community there will always be other soft boundaries which may potentially transform into hard boundaries, or new soft boundaries may emerge and transform into hard ones. Moreover, boundaries between communities exist along a spectrum between hard and soft poles and are are always in flux. This is so as much in the modern nation as in premodern societies. Thus the growth of group self-consciousness does not entail the equal rejection of all others. A community- may occupy a position on the harder side of the spectrum with respect to community A than to community B, and these positions may change over time as well. Not only do soft boundaries harden, but hard boundaries soften as well, as when a prolonged conflict against a common enemy submerges the differences between two erstwhile foes now united in their common opposition.

This mode of analysis challenges the notion of a stable community that gradually develops a national self-awareness like the evolution of a species. Rather it asserts a deliberate mobilization within a network of cultural representations toward a particular object of identification. Various social actors—often different groups of intellectuals and politicians—develop and deploy narratives to redefine the boundaries and identities of a collectivity with multiple identifications. But even when this closure is succesful, it will unravel in time; the privileged practices that organize this identification will also change.

Consider some examples of this process from modern Chinese history. The Qing dynasty (1644-1911) originated from a Manchu ethnic community which maintained an ambivalent attitude toward the dominant Han culture that it ruled. In the early stages of its rule it actively sought to maintain Manchu distinctiveness through a variety of means, including a ban on intermarriage and Han migration to Manchuria, and the fostering of different customs. In time, however, not only was the ban on migration and intermarriage ignored, but Manchu embrace of Chinese political institutions caused it to blur the distinctions between it and the communities it ruled. More importantly, and unlike the Mongols, the Manchus recognized early the roots of politics in culture and rapidly became the patrons

not only of elite culture, but also of popular Han gods like Guandi and Mazu. Thus by the eighteenth century, in terms of their social and cultural relations, the Manchu communities resident in the hundreds of garrisons outside of their homeland in the northeast were losing their literacy in Manchu as well as contact with their folk traditions and melding into the general Han populace (Crossley 1990, 3, 30; Kuhn 1990, 68-70).

At the same time, however, powerful countertendencies worked to shore up— or reconstruct—a Manchu identity. Most noteworthy was the effort of the Qianlong emperor (1736-95) to introduce a classic narrative *of discent* of the Manchus—the "Researches of Manchu Origins" discussed by Crossley (1987). "Researches" traced the *descent of* the Manchu clans to the first attestable peoples of the northeast thereby demonstrating a "racial" distinctiveness which Crossley defines as "immutable identity based on ancestral descent" (1987,762). Moreover, it celebrated the Manchus as inheritors of the imperial tradition of the region which was independent of (dissented from) the Han Chinese imperial tradition and most closely associated with the Jin empire of the twelfth century. To be sure, this narrative of *discent* played a part within a wider representation of power necessitated by the imperatives of ruling an empire which encompassed both Han Chinese and central Asian polities (Crossley 1987; Kuhn 1990, 69). Confucian universalism was offset by racial exclusivism, because, as Crossley says, every "racial" group—Manchus, Mongols, Tibetans, Han, and others—had their proper status according to their race. These races bore a relationship to the emperor set by the historical role of their ancestors in the creation and development of the state (Crossley 1987, 780). But this narrative which endorsed a conception of "race" as a constitutive principle of community, was also motivated by the fear on the part of the emperor of total cultural extinction of the Manchus. Thus, the Qianlong emperor took it upon himself to champion the Manchu language and values and punish those who forgot their roots (Kuhn 1990, 66-68).

Manchu identity flowered tragically in the late nineteenth century, both in response to Qianlong's efforts and also as a reaction to a Han ethnic exclusivism that became most evident during the years of the Taiping Rebellion (1850-64). As early as 1840, in the days before the British attack on the lower Yangzi city of Zhenjiang during the Opium War, the tension in the city led to hostility between the Manchu soldiers in the garrisons and the civilian Han populace in which countless Han were slaughtered by Manchu soldiers on the allegation that they were traitors. Elliot shows that the entire event was interpreted as ethnic conflict both by survivors and by local historians (Elliot 1990,64). This simmering tension culminated in the horrifying massacre of Manchu bannermen and their families during the Taiping Rebellion and again in the republican revolution of 1911 (Crossley 1990, 130, 196-97). Manchus in the republican era sustained their identity only by hiding it from public view and by quietly teaching the oral traditions to their children and grandchildren within their homes. Today Manchu identity finds expression not only in their status as a national minority in the PRC, but, as Crossley observes, in such forms as the Manchu Association formed in Taipei in 1981 (Crossley 1990, 216).

My effort to link narratives of *discent* to the self-definition of a group is relevant not only for ethnic nationalisms such as those of the Manchu or Mongols, but also for those less visible communities within. These include regional and provincial groupings within the Han such as the Cantonese, the so-called subethnic groups such as the Tanka boat people, the Hiii and Subei people.[8] For example, the mid-nineteenth-century Taiping Rebellion was built up by the Hakka minority of South China who discovered a narrative of *discent* in a version of Christianity which depicted them as a "chosen people." This narrative gave them a mission as "god worshippers" in their protracted, dreary battle against the earlier settlers in South China, whom they now saw as idolatrous, and caused them to celebrate their own distinctive traditions over those of the larger Han community of which they were a highly ambiguous part. As the movement developed imperial ambitions, the Hakka coupled their anti-idolatrous message with appeals to an older rhetoric of the struggle of the Han against the Manchu (Kuhn 1977). The Taiping movement is instructive in showing how a community which had been succesfully hardened by a redemptive narrative of *discent* was, in another political context, obliged to reopen the question of its identity, or rather, identities.

CONCLUSION

Let me end this essay with an illustration of the complex process of nationformation from the history of the United States, namely Southern nationalism in the American Civil War. It will, I hope, also reveal one dimension of the instability and repression involved in the idea of the American nation. Although the Southern slaveholder's hierarchical society was different from Northern individualist and entrepreneurial society in the early 1830s, the two accommodated each other quite comfortably within the nation. As Ellis and Wildavsky suggest, it was only when radically egalitarian abolitionists with a powerful sense of their mission and their refusal to ''temporize with evil'' began their agitation in midcentury that a polarization appeared and Southerners were prompted to develop a counternarrative which infused slavery with value. "Slavery was transformed from an instrumental tool into a symbol of the slave-holding community's aspirations and sense of identity" (1990, 103). Justifying the master-slave relation as the foundation of a good society entailed, of course, a head-on clash with the individualist culture of the North. In turn, this induced many in the north to articulate and insist on the narrative celebrating the individualist way of life.

By turning inwards and privileging the social practice of slave ownership, boundaries were hardened between the North and South. Nation-makers in the South began the task of reordering cultural meanings. For instance, they came to reject the Jeffersonian principle of equality of men and turned to concepts of "hierarchy, rank and order." Boundary construction took on tangible expression as mail from the North came to be closely monitored, those thought to be abolitionists expelled, and any relationship with northerners came to be suspect. Thus

the narrative of the abolitionists transformed what were two patterns of social relations in one nation into two self-conscious, exclusive nations.

And yet, the historical view persists that the North worked nationalistically to preserve the Union whereas the South was engaged in sectionalism and secessionism. David Morris Potter, a Southerner and a prominent historian of the 1950s and 1960s, has penetrated the nexus between historical practice and the ideology of the nation-state with unmatched clarity. What was being repressed when historians tended to accept the Northern view was not merely the ideology of the victorious establishment. He writes,

> Once the ethical question of the character of southern institutions becomes linked to the factual question of the nature of group loyalties in the South, it becomes very difficult for the historian to deal with the factual question purely on its own merits. If the finding that a majority of southern citizens wanted a nation of their own is inseparable from the conclusion that the institution of slavery enjoyed a democratic sanction, it is always possible to reverse the reasoning and to argue that since slavery could not have enjoyed a democratic sanction, therefore the Southern people must not have been a "people" in the sense that would entitle them to want a nation of their own. (Potter 1968, 64)

I began this essay by exploring the relations between our modern values, the ideology of the nation-state and historical scholarship. It is easy to see now how most of the central dichotomies of modernity—such as empire/nation, tradition/modernity, center/periphery (or parochiality)—locate the nation-state in the morally privileged term. Historical writing has contributed the dynamic that links these terms in an epochal narrative of enlightenment and modernization and in doing so has secured the transparency of the nation-state's claim to historical subjecthood. Social historians and others, while sometimes defying this claim in practice, have not constructed a theoretical challenge to history as the History of the nation-state. The alternative I have proposed has emphasized the multiple sources of identity creation, the construction/repression of narratives of *discent* which often posture as eternal, essential or evolutionary history, and in place of a teleological movement toward a more cohesive ideal, a mobilization toward particular objects of identification. In this way, we may view the histories of nations as contingently as nations are themselves contingent. But this is no more than a beginning, for as David Potter suggests, we have as yet no response to the great challenge of writing a history from outside the ideology of the nation-state. That challenge is to come to grips with one's own ethical values as a historian, and the enormity of it derives from the fact that these values have themselves been intimately shaped by the nation-state.

NOTES

]. In fact, the effort to define nationalism, nation-state and related concepts is by no means over and turns out to have been a minor industry over the last century. See, for instance, Lours L. Snyder's "Nationalism and the Flawed Concept of Ethnicity," in which he declared that his earlier attempt to clarify the meaning of nationalism yielded a definition

of no less than 208 pages (1983, 253). In general, the debates revolve around the more obvious factors such as the proportions and role of objective and subjective criteria and how to distinguish ethnicity from nationalism. Less obvious questions, such as the meaning of heterogeneity in a nation, how some collectivities come to be included and others excluded and how collectivities gain and lose national identification complicate the debate even further.

2. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the modern philosophical meaning of the "subject" as "More fully *conscious* or *thinking subject* ... the thinking or cognizing agent; the self or ego." *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary,* vol. 2, p. 3120. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.

3. See for instance Burton Stein's concept of the segmentary state in India (1980) and Tambiah's galactic polity in the Thai kingdom of Ayutthaya (1985).

4. Even a premodern village, community has to be imagined. Etienne Balibar says about "imaginary" communities that *"Every social community reproduced by the functioning of institutions is imaginary,* that is, it is based on the projection of individual existence into the weft of a collective narrative, on the recognition of a collective *name* and on traditions lived as the trace of an immemorial past (even when they have been created and inculcated in the recent past). But this comes down to accepting that, in certain conditions, *only imaginary communities are real"* (346).

5. The discussion is reproduced in the third lecture of nationalism in Sun's Three People's Principles delivered in 1924. The attack against cosmopolitanism is also directed against the cosmopolitan strain in the May 4th "new culture" movement. Incidentally, the English version of this lecture contains yet another level of repression for it leaves out the vitriolic racialist language characteristic of the original Chinese text and omits many of Sun's references to his debates with the reformist cosmopolitans in the early years of the century.

6. In case it appears that the advocates of the ancient nation always win out over the advocates of the future nation, witness Maoist China during the Cultural Revolution. There is no question that Mao's radical utopianism was intensely nationalist in character and understood as a form of *Chinese* socialism. At the same time, its passionate utopianism anchored the foundations of the new community not in the historical past, but in the liberated future.

7. For a good example of a binary opposition defining the national identity of Australian settler culture see Wolfe (1991). Australian settlers adapted the anthropological notion of "dream time" and the Dreaming complex—the precontact idyll in which the aborigines lived—as timelessness and spacelessness, and they counterposed it to their own idea of "awakenment" embodied in the doctrine of progress and legitimation of colonization. By doing so, they were able to establish a claim to the land by romanticizing the "dreaming" aborigines and thus excluding them from any terrestrial claims.

8. Consider the way in which the hardening of boundaries between Chinese and Japanese during the Japanese occupation in Shanghai affected the internal contours of the Chinese nation. Emily Honig writes of the enduring prejudice against the underclass Subei people of northern Jiangsu in Shanghai, where a common curse is "Subei swine." After the 1932 Japanese attack on Shanghai, the Subei people became identified as Japanese collaborators and during the occupation of 1937-45, the expression "Jiangbei (Subei) traitor" and the accompanying hostility toward them became widespread. While there may have been an element of truth to the accusations of collaboration, Honig observes that other people who collaborated were not targeted in the same way. It was the intensified nationalist rhetoric in the context of previous prejudice against them that marked them as traitors. One Subei native complained in 1932, "When I walk on the street and hear people

making fun of us it feels worse than being a Chinese in a foreign country" (quoted in Honig 1989, 269). The hardening of boundaries had excorporated the Subei folk from the nation.

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