The Journal of Asian Studies Vol. 71, No. 2 (May) 2012: 423–446.
© The Association for Asian Studies, Inc., 2012 doi:10.1017/S0021911812000113

What Is This "Chinese" in Overseas Chinese? Sojourn Work and the Place of China's Minority Nationalities in Extraterritorial Chinese-ness

CHRIS VASANTKUMAR

This essay argues that to adequately answer the question its title poses, anthropological approaches to national and transnational China(s) must be grounded in the history of Qing imperial expansion. To this end, it compares and explores the connections between three examples of the "sojourn work" that has gone into making mobile, multiethnic populations abroad into Overseas Chinese. The first example deals with recent official attempts to project the People's Republic of China's multiethnic vision of Chinese-ness beyond its national borders. The second highlights the importance of the early Chinese nation-state in the making of Overseas Chinese community in Southeast Asia in the first decades of the twentieth century. The final case foregrounds the late imperial routes of nascent Chinese nationalism to argue that, in contrast to much of the current rhetoric on the Chinese "diaspora," national and transnational modes of Chinese community emerged together from the ruins of the Qing empire. Together the three examples point to the need to question the usual ways scholars have conceptualized (Overseas) Chinese-ness.

One afternoon in early November 2003, I was sitting in a booth at the gaily-decorated cafe attached to the *Huaqiao Fandian*, one of most popular foreign tourists' hotels in Xiahe,[1] Gansu province, China. Opposite me, his face reflected in the long mirrors running along the interior walls of the restaurant, was the establishment's owner, one of the richest men in the area. T., as I will call him for now, is a polymath and a tycoon, fluent in at least five languages, from the slightly accented but elegant English in which we conversed to his sterling Mandarin. The former was honed in elite private schools and at the University of California, Santa Barbara, the latter polished in a two-year stint at the Beijing Language and Culture University. At the time of our conversation, T. had recently taken over the reins of his family's enterprises from his elderly father, who had been the first local émigré to return to the region after the beginning of the reform era in 1979. T. is a tall man with a dignified mien and an easy smile. He is, however, all business when it comes to doing business in China.

Chris Vasantkumar (cvasantk@hamilton.edu) is Luce Junior Professor of Asian Studies and Anthropology at Hamilton College.

[1]See Makley (2007) for a wrenching account of Xiahe under high Maoism and its aftermath.

"This century will be China's century," he assures me. "The government is in some ways still old-fashioned in their outlook, but over the last ten years they have been actively promoting the privatization of publicly owned companies as well as seeking to foster internationalization of investment." Privatization is only just beginning to reach Xiahe, but amazing opportunities are out there for those, who, as he puts it, "have the balls or the money" to take advantage of them. T. and his father have certainly not lacked for audacity. Having first made their fortune in exporting locally produced textiles, they expanded to holdings in jewelry and semiprecious stones, herbal medicine, and the wool trade, but five years previous they switched to tourism and have not looked back.

When T.'s father returned to Xiahe, he was able to extract a parcel of real estate from the local government as an incentive to invest in the area. At the time, it was farmland with just one house. Nowadays it is smack in the middle of Xiahe's busiest market area, a lodestone for peasants and pilgrims from miles around, and equally magnetic for tourists both international and domestic. To tap into this growing traffic, T. and his father built a hotel and cafe facing the main street of town. Oriented towards European group tours, the hotel has been remarkably successful.[2] Throughout the process of investment and construction, the local government was very supportive, in no small part because T. and his father were well-connected overseas investors. In recent years, overseas investment has come to be seen as a key means of improving people's living conditions in China's "backward" western provinces. Especially since the implementation of the *Xibu Dakaifa* or Great Western Development Scheme in 2000, the Chinese government has sought to attract overseas investors with tax breaks and other economic incentives.

T. is genuinely optimistic about what the future holds. "Let people know," he tells me, "that I'm not a Communist, but I feel China is different now. Don't rely on negative media reports—come and see for yourself. China is going the right way; in ten to fifteen years it will be the number-one country in Asia." Compared to the small Asian principality where he grew up, China is less free but considerably more stable and the pace of its development is much faster. T. is more than willing to trade the odd liberty for profit: "They know I am here for the money," he confesses. "If I had gotten involved in politics, I would have been kicked out ten years ago."

In some respects this conversation seems unremarkable: a wealthy overseas investor returns "home" and cashes in. T. is neither the first nor the wealthiest example of such an individual. His account constructs post-WTO China as a land of opportunity where self-reliance has replaced statist complacency, where some might starve but others can drive Buicks if they have the cash, the

[2]Like many other businesses in the region, it was hit hard by the strife of March 2008. As of the summer of 2009, business was beginning to recover from a lengthy drought and T. was optimistic once again about the future.

connections, or the cojones. The name of his hotel, *Huaqiao Fandian* (usually "Overseas Chinese Hotel" in English), would seem to be similarly banal. An article from *Chinese Nation Magazine* on returnees to the region features an interview with T.'s father that includes a brief account of the logic of its selection. In it, he proclaims, "The reason why I gave the hotel the name of *Huaqiao* is because I am a Chinese person (*wo shi zhongguoren*) and my sons are *huaqiao* who ardently love China" (*wode erzi shi reaizhe zhongguo de huaqiao*), Diemujiangteng (n.d.).

At first blush, T.'s narrative might be just a localized variant of the emergent discourses of racialized, Confucian capitalism current in diasporic circles. Ong (1999) has famously described the efforts of key figures in the Chinese communities of Southeast Asia to spread images of transnational Chinese-ness in which "capital and race are interbraided" in what Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore has called "the glow of Chinese fraternity." The end result at which such "racial" and "masculinist" statements are aimed is the construction of an extraterritorial community of "Chinese" capitalists who belong "ultimately to one big family" based on "common racial origin, ethnic traditions, and alliances that penetrate bureaucratic rules and transcend ideological differences" (Ong 1999, 65–6).

In these visions of essential Chinese-ness, the Overseas Chinese can be divorced from any rooting in the soil of the People's Republic. The transnational structures of feeling to which they appeal are cast as external and potentially opposed to the Chinese nation-state (Tu 2005). Such stories about the nature of Overseas Chinese-ness have been widely circulated and have come to form much of the common sense about the category of people in question. But with regard to T., there are a couple of wrinkles that I have kept from you on purpose: first, T., or rather Tsering, is a Tibetan. His father fled the country soon after the communist triumph in 1949 but went to Nepal, not Taiwan. Tsering's father was originally a monk from nomad country near Xiahe. In 1957 he walked all the way to Lhasa, a journey of eleven months, heard whispers of trouble brewing, and kept on going to Kathmandu. There he left the monkhood, married a local woman, started a successful carpet company, and sent his two sons to a Jesuit school in Darjeeling, India, and eventually to college in the United States and postgraduate study in China. Second, the English version of the name of his hotel, the *Huaqiao Fandian*, a common enough Mandarin appellation, usually rendered as "Overseas Chinese Hotel," is here, by contrast, "The Overseas *Tibetan* Hotel."[3]

Interlude: Sojourn Work

Is Chinese-ness given shape by national borders or is it unaffected by them? Is the "Chinese" in "Overseas Chinese" and "Han Chinese" one and the same? Comparing constructions of Chinese-ness in the scholarly literature on the "Overseas

[3]The Tibetan version of the name, *Phyir sdod bod mi'i mgron khang*, translates roughly as "hotel of outside dwelling Tibetans."

Chinese" (Ahearn and Gates 1981; Callahan 2003; Duara 1997; Freedman 1979; McKeown 2001; Ong 1999; Ong and Nonini 1997; Siu 1952; Skinner 1957; Tu 2005; Wang 1981b, 1991a, 1991b) with those in work on ethnic minorities in the People's Republic of China (PRC) (Brown 1996, 2004; Bulag 2002; Davis 2005; Gladney 1991, 1994, 2004; Harrell 1990, 1995, 2001; Litzinger 1998, 2000; Mueggler 2001; Rack 2005; Schein 2000) prompts such uncomfortable questions. Yet none of these questions quite captures the strangeness of the contemporary situation, for Chinese-ness as it is studied today is simultaneously many *and* one—many within the PRC and one without. Within the People's Republic, a "unified multi-ethnic state," Chinese-ness is formally plural. The Chinese nation or *Zhonghua minzu* is officially composed of the majority Han and fifty-five minority peoples (*shaoshu minzu*).[4] Outside of the PRC, however, in place of the nationally contained, multiplex Chinese-ness of the "mainland" one finds an Overseas Chinese-ness that is geographically unbounded and resolutely uniform in ethno-racial terms—one ethnicity instead of fifty-six. Territorial and extraterritorial[5] versions of Chinese-ness are not congruent. The crucial question, then, is how has Chinese-ness today come to be comprised of *both* fifty-six ethnicities and one?

To this point, sinological inquiry has not really known what to make of this Janus-faced Chinese-ness. Alluding to the division between ethnic and national bases of Chinese-ness has itself become fairly commonplace. Lamentably, however, this divide has been both dehistoricized and under-theorized. Little attention has been paid to its continuing effects on scholarly practice. Moreover, the complex historical interrelationships between territorial and extraterritorial Chinese-nesses, which had received some attention in past decades, have been virtually ignored in China anthropology, if not more generally, in recent years. As a result, contemporary studies of Chinese-ness are confronted with an apparently paradoxical situation.

Historian Tu Wei-ming explains the situation eloquently: the central conundrum of Chinese-ness today is how to map the distinction between the "variety of nationalities that are ethnically and culturally Chinese," encapsulated in the term *Huaren* on the one hand and *Zhongguoren* on the other (Tu 2005, 162). Tu glosses these terms tautologically, rendering *Huaren* as "people of Chinese origin" and *Zhongguoren* as "people of China, the state."[6] The former is "not

[4]For the vicissitudes of the term *minzu* see, among others, Gladney (1991, 78–93).

[5]Describing communities that extend across state boundaries is something of a terminological challenge. Given McKeown's (2001, 10–12) critique of vocabularies of "diaspora," "globalization," and "transnationalism," I have opted to avoid these terms (except where discussing others and the occasional, non-anachronistic use of transnational) and employ a vocabulary of territorial (bounded) and extraterritorial (boundary crossing) (Duara 1997, 39).

[6]The most common Mandarin terms for the populations that have come to be called the Overseas Chinese, *huaqiao* (literally *hua* sojourners) and *haiwai huaren* (literally overseas *hua* people) would seem to be linked most fundamentally to Tu's "people of Chinese origin." Yet *Zhongguo*, the

geopolitically centered" but instead invokes "a common ancestry and a shared cultural background" (Tu 2005, 162).[7] The latter by contrast "necessarily evokes obligations and loyalties of political affiliation and the myth of the Middle Kingdom" (Tu 2005, 162). Here cultural and national bases of Chinese-ness are posed as potentially antagonistic alternatives. Further, this distinction possesses something approaching moral force.

For Tu, ethno-cultural Chinese-ness (being "of Chinese origin") has deep historical roots in millennia of "Chinese" civilization, while civic Chinese-ness (becoming of Chinese destiny,[8] if you will, by virtue of holding citizenship in "China, the state") is an unwelcome precipitate of the traumas of China's long nineteenth century (Tu 2005, 147–48). This later, civic Chinese-ness squats in the ruins of its earlier, ethnic counterpart. We can see the degree to which Tu conceives ethnic and civic Chinese-nesses as distinct and opposed in his answer to the question "Does citizenship of a Chinese national state guarantee one's Chineseness?" (2005, 167): "an obvious no."

That one can hold a Chinese passport and, in theory, not be "Chinese" highlights the importance of determining how Chinese-ness can be recognized as Chinese-ness without reifying "the very category—'Chinese'—that must be explained" (Karl 2002, 54). This essay is an extended meditation on this problem. In it, I attend to Chinese-ness(es) as processual rather than fixed. In place of static modes of "being of Chinese origin" I suggest the importance of examining how individuals and collectivities might *become*, stay, and cease to be Chinese. Specifically, I treat the Overseas Chinese not as an always already naturally existing outgrowth of something prior called China[9] but as a contingent artifact of historical processes of the production of what David Potter has called the "conditions of commonality" basic to the cultivation of nationalist sentiment (Potter 1973 quoted in Sheehan 1981, 9 n.17).

This approach foregrounds the hard work of constructing conditions of commonality of which Overseas Chinese consciousness and communities have historically been the results. Drawing upon the common translation of the ubiquitous Mandarin term *huaqiao*, as "Chinese sojourners," I term such efforts "sojourn work." Sojourn work comprises two interrelated efforts: first, rendering it possible for populations to be construed and construe themselves as "Chinese," and second, recontextualizing the journeys these populations

---

Mandarin term for China, is itself a shortened version of *Zhonghua Renmin Gonghe Guo* (People's Republican Country of the Central Fluorescence; see Mair [2005, 52–54] for a detailed dissection). *Hua* is actually on both sides of the equation.

[7]While Tu ethnicizes *Hua*, Chow (1997, 50) notes that at the dawn of Chinese nationalism, Zhang Binglin "argued that the three terms *Hua*, *Xia* and *Han* denoted different aspects of the 'Chinese.' *Hua* referred to the land, while *Xia* and *Han* referred to the 'race.'"

[8]Cf. Malkki (1997, 67): "The homeland here is not so much a territorial or topographic entity as a moral destination."

[9]See Axel (2001) for a critique of the assumption that the place of origin constitutes the diaspora.

undertake, whether retrospectively or prospectively, as sojourns (temporary travels away) linked crucially to the Chinese nation-state. Sojourn work is historically contingent, complexly territorialized, and linked to nationalist concerns that both are constituted by and crosscut nation-state boundaries.

From this perspective, modes of imagining extraterritorial Chinese community, far from working against the nation-state, may be bound up in crucial ways with state projects of trans/national unity. In place of Tu's binary logic of Chinese-ness, scholars must heed Callahan's suggestion that in a "Chinese" context, "the nation and the diaspora are not separate autonomous 'substances' with core identities; rather, Chinese nationalism and diaspora take on meaning in relation to each other" (2003, 489). Positing the nation-state and transnationalism as opposed, contradictory, or separable forms of imagining community does more harm than good—not least because it masks and dehistoricizes the complex mutual implication of national and transnational Chinese-nesses, obscuring both the late imperial circumstances of their co-creation as well the latter's consequences for sinology today.

Below, I analyze three instances of sojourn work to highlight the intimacies between territorial and extraterritorial modes of Chinese-ness. I begin with the story of recent returns of *huaqiao* Tibetans and then work back in time, grounding my analysis of their sojourns in discussions, first, of the importance of the territorial nation-state to the galvanizing of Overseas Chinese sentiment in the early years of the Chinese Republic and, second, of the extraterritorial itineraries of Chinese (proto-)nationalism in the intellectual ferment of the late Qing. I conclude by suggesting ways in which acknowledging the intimacy of territorial and extraterritorial Chinese-nesses could reshape sinological inquiry. First, however, let us return to the "Overseas Tibetan."

(MIS)TRANSLATING *HUAQIAO*

For many scholars, translating *huaqiao* as "Overseas Tibetan" raises conceptual hackles because it upends two sets of received oppositions, one affective and one categorical. First, it works against the stories of Han-Tibetan antagonism that dominate Western representations of the Tibet question. In these stories—many of which were truer for the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) than for Tibetan areas in Gansu and Qinghai prior to the March 2008 riots—Chinese and Tibetan are posited as opposites rather than potential cognates.[10] Second, translating *huaqiao* as "Overseas Tibetan" calls into question a problematic set of

[10]"In English, we can write Han Chinese, but it is impossible to hyphenate other nationalities with Chinese. Mongol Chinese and Tibetan Chinese are impossibilities" (Bulag 2002, 17, 18). See Leibold (2010b) for an account of the rise of absolutist popular Han nationalism in the aftermath of the riots.

assumptions about the relationship between territorial and extraterritorial forms of community that posit the latter as separate from and opposed to the former.[11]

While one might expect such objections to come primarily from sinophiles such as Tu, critics of China have also been swayed by such rhetoric. Thus, ironically, Bulag (2002), a notably acid and eloquent critic of the supposedly timeless verities of Chinese culture and civilization that Tu assiduously promotes, arrives at the same endpoint as the latter—namely that real Chinese-ness is the natural property of the Han and that any attempt to link non-Han to Chinese-ness is doomed to failure or, at best, some sort of sad ethno-national transvestitism. Without seeking to diminish in any way the suffering of Mongols at the hands of the Han over the last century, I suggest that while "continu[ing] to use the English word *Chinese* to designate the 'Han' in contrast to Mongol," may be satisfying affectively, it is overly limiting analytically (Bulag 2002, 18). Assuming an a priori difference in kind between Han and non-Han in which Chinese-ness is always already the sole legitimate property of the former renders it nearly impossible to analyze emergent modes of multi-*minzu* extraterritorial Chinese-ness. Moreover, it obscures the sojourn work that has gone into bringing Han extraterritorial Chinese-ness into being.

Where the coinciding blind spots of Bulag and Tu would render visions of the Overseas Tibetan as *huaqiao* either unanalyzeable or as unworthy of analysis, I suggest that despite the cognitive dissonance it might provoke, this (mis)translation of *huaqiao* as "Overseas Tibetan" just might "crack open new questions, questions not previously visible in the subject matter itself" (Gallison 2003). Specifically, it forces us to ask, with a nod to Stuart Hall (1996), just what is this Chinese in "Overseas Chinese?" How can we take seriously attempts to render Tibetan travels beyond the nation as Chinese sojourns without uncritically endorsing nationalist aims? How should this translation affect scholars' understandings of the ambivalent position of "Overseas Tibetan Compatriots" (*haiwai zangzu tongbao*[12]) as well as of their returned counterparts (*guiguo zangzu tongbao*) in contemporary national and

[11]A final set of objections to the characterization of Tibetans living outside the PRC as *huaqiao* (i.e., as "Chinese sojourners") stems from a mixture of terminological and political concerns. First, as one anonymous reviewer of this essay astutely noted, Tibetans are officially grouped separately from *huaqiao* populations: government offices tasked with dealing with overseas and returned Tibetans deal with *tongbao* ("compatriots"; literally co-uterines), not *huaqiao*. The same reviewer also observed that most "overseas Tibetans" would not think of themselves as *huaqiao*. Further, Tibetans like Tsering would seem to become *huaqiao* only if they return—if, that is, they "cease being sojourners and cease being overseas." In contrast to other *huaqiao* residing abroad who are constructed as always already potential returnees, for Tibetans, returning itself retrospectively reconstructs time abroad as a "Chinese" sojourn.

[12]*Tongbao*, defined by Wang as "natural-born Chinese" who "remain outside the PRC's jurisdiction" (1991a, 225), is a peculiar term. Literally "co-uterine" (Dikötter 2005), it combines this intimate physical reference with an emphasis on shared politics (Hsiao and Sullivan 1979). Wang suggests that the logic of grouping various populations under the *tongbao* umbrella has less to do with race or territory than with "the kinds of common problems they pose for, and the particular nature of the contribution they can offer to, the PRC" (1991a, 226).

transnational mappings of Chinese-ness?[13] Ultimately, how are we to reconcile national minorities and transnational projects?

SOJOURN WORK I: "WITH THE SINCERITY OF A MOTHER'S CALL"

Since the fall of Tibet to communist rule in the 1950s, Tibetans have engaged in a complex set of journeying practices that range from taking permanent refuge in the exile communities of north India to temporary trans-Himalayan travels on Chinese passports to visit relatives living abroad. During my fieldwork in Tibetan areas of northwest China, I met many individuals who had made the arduous journey to India but had, for various reasons, opted to return to China. Some had returned furtively with a critical consciousness of the limits of Chinese nationalism. Others, like Tsering's father, had returned with official blessing to cash in on the promise of economic development. Whether temporary or permanent, licit or illicit, selfless or self-interested, these sojourning practices were[14] undertaken at some remove from more usual circuits of subaltern movement in contemporary China, which generally run between poor rural hinterlands and the booming urban East.

From the point of view of the PRC government, Tibetan peregrinations to South Asia and the community of Tibetans living outside the borders of China that has been the product of such movements represent a source of potential "splittist" behavior—a threat to the very fabric of the nation. Rather than conforming with prescribed circuits of movement that work to further the developmentalist projects of the contemporary Chinese state, Tibetans' trans-Himalayan circuits have been an uncomfortable reminder of the persistence of multiple centers (Lhasa, Dharamsala, the West) that unsettles what one might call the "concentricity" of the "One China Policy."

The Chinese state's response to these eccentrically routed communities took a surprising turn in the years leading up to the strife of 2008. PRC authorities, largely under the auspices of the United Front, had been actively wooing Tibetans overseas to reorient their sentiments towards the Chinese nation and recenter their actions towards the building of a relatively well-off national future.[15] On

[13]Discussions of Tibetan returnees simultaneously employ idioms of *huaqiao* (overseas Chinese/Chinese sojourner) and *zangzu tongbao/zangbao* (Tibetan compatriots). At present, the relationship between these two terms is marked by differentiation in formal contexts and convergence in informal usage. Formally *zangzu tongbao* and *huaqiao* are parallel rather than synonymous. Most official documents treat them as such, and the bureaucracies set up to handle the two (*qiaowu ban* for *huaqiao* and *zangbao ban* for Tibetan compatriots) are separate and discrete. (I thank one of *JAS*'s reviewers for pressing this point.) It is certainly clear enough, however, that there is some unofficial overlapping between the terms.

[14]Since the events of the spring of 2008, such trans-border movements have been drastically curtailed (Wong 2009).

[15]Thanks to Isabelle Henrion-Dourcy for emphasizing the role of the United Front.

the PRC website "100 Questions and Answers about Tibet," for example, answer 94 concerns China's policies towards "Tibetan compatriots residing abroad":

> The Chinese government has adopted the policy that, "all patriots belong to one big family, whether they rally to the common cause early or late." Anyone, as long as he or she does not participate in separatist activities or harm the unification of the motherland and the unity of the Chinese nation, is welcome by the Chinese government, whether he or she comes back to visit friends and relatives, or to settle. Those who had participated in separatist activities in the past may also be permitted to return, provided that they cease their separatist activities and change their stance on "Tibet independence." (China Tibet Information Center n.d.a)

To participate in Chinese society, Tibetans need not even return "home," although that is also encouraged. Rather they are exhorted to realign their movements around a multiethnic prospect of national "Chinese-ness" no longer neatly circumscribed by territorial borders.

This "Tibetan Compatriots Abroad Work" (*guowai zangbao gongzuo*) kicked off at the dawn of the era of Reform and Opening with the formation in January 1979 of a region-level committee for the reception of Tibetan compatriots returning to visit relatives or settle down in the TAR along with city-level reception offices in Zhangmu on the Nepal border and seven other locations shortly thereafter.[16] Such efforts increased dramatically in intensity over the years between the events of June 4, 1989, and the troubles of March 2008, as living standards in Lhasa improved dramatically (for some) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came to increasingly "rel[y] on Pan-Chinese nationalism as a supplementary ideology and as a basis for a new united front in post-Tiananmen China" (Guo 2003, 42).[17]

Texts in support of these United Front efforts paint the attractions of a return "home" for Tibetans in both familial and economic terms. Diemujiangteng describes such incitements in the context of the difficult lives of Tibetans "deceived" by splittists into going abroad:

> In these foreign places, they experienced for themselves the bitterness of living under a stranger's roof; in these foreign places, they heard

[16]By 1998, this committee had welcomed the visits of 22,935 Tibetans visiting relatives and more than 2,200 returning from abroad to settle down (China Tibet Information Center n.d.b). This number includes 86 Tibetans who returned to settle in the Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture where Xiahe is located (Diemujiangteng n.d.).

[17]According to Guo (2003), "two things determine the composition of a United Front: the nature of the Party's enemy and the Party's fundamental task at a certain time…. The 'Chinese people' is actually defined with reference to the CCP's enemy and the CCP's fundamental task" (42–3). See Leibold (2010a, 2010b) for a discussion of a possible end to the *minzu tuanjie* framework. "Unity in unity" may yet replace "unity in diversity" as the official line.

> the sound of their homeland becoming rich and powerful, of *minzu* becoming prosperous, they listened to their homeland call with the sincerity of a mother calling to wandering children (*lingting daole zuguo muqin dui youzi zhencheng de huhuan*). These experiences caused these Tibetan compatriots leading difficult lives wandering in strange lands to resolve firmly to return to their ancestral homeland and, breaking through all sorts of obstructions, duty bound not to turn back, they returned to the embrace (*huaibao*) of their ancestral homeland. (Diemujiangteng n.d.)

It is clear that these returns exist on both affective and political terrains. Dankao, an aged returnee to Gannan, frames his longing in emotional, even sensuous terms: "In India, almost every day I would think of my native place: each of its trees, its grasses. I would think of the Mani stones of Labrang and the smell of juniper smoke. Sometimes, at night I would think so much that I could not sleep" (Diemujiangteng n.d.). Yet the realization of individual Tibetans' desires to return home, if only to be reunited with family members or to die in their native places, are transformed in United Front accounts into political acts that both lend legitimacy to the improvements in living conditions in Tibet and provide blueprints for new forms of multiethnic "Chinese" transnationalism.

United Front appeals exhort Tibetans overseas to abandon splittist proclivities and (re)commit either at home or abroad to a collective, prosperous, *Chinese* future. They seek to transform homesick exiles into nationalist sojourners—to effect a recontextualization of a population and their journeys in nationalist terms. A 2002 text on "The Situation of the Work of Managing the Reception of Returned and Visiting Tibetan Compatriots in the TAR" attempts to construct a connection between emotion and politics. As befitting a "mother calling to her wandering children," it emphasizes the importance of working diligently to make returnees both temporary and permanent "feel the loving care (*guanhuai*) of the government and the party, the warmth (*wennuan*) of socialism, to promote (*cujinle*) their love of country and party and to raise their socialist consciousness (*juewu*)." The ultimate goal in all of this is "to cause them gradually to become Chinese citizens not just in name but also in actuality " (*yinqi tamen zhubu zhuancheng mingfuqishi de zhongguo gongmin*, China Tibet Information Center n.d.b).

Prior to the turmoil of 2008, the PRC sought to turn returned Tibetan compatriots into real Chinese citizens and mold their overseas counterparts into long-distance *Chinese* nationalists. On both counts, the conversion such United Front work endeavored to enact was political rather than ethnic. The goal was not to turn Tibetans into "ethnic" Chinese or Han but, in classic United Front fashion, to convert "wavering" Tibetans to the party's (and, by extension, the nation's) political cause (Van Slyke 1970, 128) —to make Tibetans Chinese *politically* rather than ethnically (thus short-circuiting Bulag's critique). In such

attempts, Chinese-ness has been, despite the timelessness of official nationalist mappings of the nation, apparently emergent and open-ended. With such policies, clearly, the PRC was attempting to solidify new possible bases for being Chinese, to convince new constituencies to align their futures with the destiny of the Chinese nation-state. Part and parcel of this work was an attempt to project the PRC's multiethnic national project[18] beyond the confines of the territorial nation-state that hailed not just returned Tibetans but their kinfolk abroad as potential members of a deterritorialized, multiethnic Chinese nation.

Sojourn Work II: "Teochiu, Cantonese, or Whatever"

The United Front work devoted to converting Tibetans abroad from splittist threat into avatars of political Chinese-ness has sought to construct new, if apparently unlikely, trajectories for *becoming* not necessarily of Chinese origin[19] but Chinese in destiny. Such sojourn work has been devoted to the production of Overseas Chinese-ness not as primordial ethnic fact but as emergent political potentiality. Such attempts hark back to prior moments of making new possible trajectories for becoming Chinese outside of China in which the unlikely targets of sojourn work were not Tibetan but "Han."

It was not always the case that the "Chinese overseas" were more fundamentally the "Overseas Chinese" (Freedman 1979 [1964], 6). Indeed, both Freedman and Skinner (1957) highlight the degree to which, rather than being a latent property of all those we would now classify as Han residing outside of the territory we now know as China, transnational consciousness of an overarching Chinese ethnic or national identity was not so much the condition for but the product of early Chinese nationalist projects. Indeed, the contrast between *zhonghua minzu* as political (civic, unnatural) Chinese-ness and *Hanzu* as ethnic and laterally natural Chinese-ness only stands if we treat the Han as an ahistorical essence rather than, itself, a political, constructed category. (On the constructedness of the Han and the emergence of the *Hanzu* in the broader circulation of racial and evolutionary thinking in late Qing, see, among others, Brown 2004; Chow 1997, 2001; Dikötter 1992, 2005; Gladney 1991, 1994; and Mullaney et al. 2012). Skinner's (1957) history of Chinese society in Thailand is especially illuminating in this regard.

Skinner (1957) describes the galvanizing effect the nationalist revolution on the mainland had on the Chinese-ness of the "Chinese" community in Thailand. Yet he presents this outcome not as instantaneous and universal but as gradual, historically contingent, and unevenly achieved. Skinner suggests that from the initial efflorescence of "Chinese" migration to Siam in the mid-eighteenth century until the early

[18]Thanks to one of *JAS*'s anonymous reviewers for this wording.
[19]This was also attempted. See Sautman (1997) and Tuttle (2005, ch. 5) for discussions of attempts to make Tibetans racially Chinese.

years of the Republic, "speech groups" (1957, 35) were far more salient to local community organization than was any sort of pan-Sinic or ethno-nationalist Chinese-ness. During this roughly 150-year period, there was not a single "Chinese" community in Thailand, but rather five main linguistic groups: speakers of Cantonese, Hakka, Hainanese, Hokkien, and Teochiu. Relations between the speech groups were often less than amicable. "The nineteenth-century literature on Siam is full of testimony to the division and animosity" between them. "In 1837," Skinner notes, "[George Windsor] Earl wrote that, 'the natives of different Chinese provinces are strongly opposed to each other, as much so, indeed, as if they belonged to rival nations'" (quoted in Skinner 1957, 139).

Even after the fall of the Qing and the ascendancy of the Guomindang (GMD), however, political and linguistic divisions remained. While there was now a consciousness of belonging to something called China, especially after the 1927 GMD purge of the communists, debate intensified as to the nature of this unifying category. "Almost all Chinese considered politics in the Chinese schools to be a natural concomitant of patriotism. The question concerned the brand of politics to be propagated" (Skinner 1957, 231). It took an intensification of nationalist contacts between the "Chinese" communities in Siam and the Chinese Republic between 1928 and 1933 to spur a movement towards instruction in Mandarin as opposed to the southern languages traditionally used by the five speech groups (Skinner 1957, 232). Yet this standardization of Chinese-ness on the national model in both Thailand and the *nanyang* more broadly was uneven in both progress and scope. As late as the 1930s, prominent Fujianese/Singaporean *huaqiao* Tan Kah Kee remarked on the *nanyang* Chinese, "As for the word 'unity', all the organizations of the overseas Chinese are mainly united in form only. Where substance is concerned, there is really very little worth talking about.… To talk emptily of unity when still like scattered sand, that is really to be regretted" (quoted in Wang 1981b, 146).

Tellingly, reflecting on the vicissitudes of the "ethnic Chinese in postwar Thailand," Skinner does not attribute some sort of inevitability to the processes by which pan-linguistic "ethnic" or "national" consciousness was achieved. While noting the relative decline in the significance of speech group divisions since the turn of the nineteenth century, Skinner treats the outcome of this process as fundamentally contingent:

> Historical events of the twentieth century have had the effect of minimizing differences among speech groups: the growth of Chinese nationalism, and not of Teochiu, Cantonese, and Hainanese nationalisms; the unification of China under the Kuomintang; the development of a popular Chinese national literature and the promotion of Kuo-yu as a Chinese national language; and in Thailand the increase of anti-Chinese sentiment and measures which … forced a certain degree of unity in

> Chinese society. Ethnic Chinese are today indisputably Chinese first and Teochiu, Cantonese, or whatever second. (1957, 315)

This all sounds remarkably like a civic, forged (trans-)nationalism, spread in ramifying circuits from a nation-state center. But the word "ethnic" muddies things here. Skinner's own fine-grained analysis makes his last sentence unintelligible. What were ethnic Chinese before they were Chinese? We are back to Karl's conundrum. If the spread of pan-dialect "Chinese" consciousness was the result of a historically contingent political project, it then follows that the category of ethnic Chinese is itself a politically shaped, thoroughly historical artifact and not some sort of eternal moral essence.

The story we see in Skinner is not just the Chinese overseas being turned into the Overseas Chinese as per Freedman, it is the "Teochiu, Cantonese, or whatever" overseas being turned into the Overseas Chinese. Wang Gungwu puts it slightly differently, noting that the process would make "all Chinese abroad [*sic*] think less of themselves as Cantonese, Hokkienese, Hakkas, Teochius, and Hailams and more as Chinese *compatriots*" (1981b, 154; emphasis added). The transformation of the "whatevers" overseas into the Overseas *Chinese* took hard work—sojourn work. In Wang's words, "it depended on China to continue to take an interest in [the communities of the *nanyang*], and on expatriate Chinese to continue to prepare later generations to be nationalistic. Otherwise," and here is the crux of things, "the Nanyang Chinese would not have overcome their distance from China and believe, as some did, that they were *as Chinese* as those at home and only different because they were temporarily abroad" (1981b, 156–57). The interventions of the territorial nation-state were perceived as central to the successful elaboration of this transnational structure of feeling.

Wang notes Tan Kah Kee's addendum to his pessimistic assessment of overseas Chinese unity:

> What I hope for is that our government [i.e., the Chinese Republic] can rule effectively and lead the people to unity. By providing an example for the overseas Chinese, surely the Chinese will respond. If our government is unable to lead the people to unity and the overseas Chinese are expected to achieve this [by themselves] first, then it is no different from climbing a tree to catch a fish. (quoted in 1981b, 158)

In place of rhetoric that would sever "cultural China" from the Chinese nation-state, we see in Skinner, Wang, and Tan's accounts the fundamental role played by the territorial nation-state in the cultivation of potential transnational communities. Further we see that, like the Tibetans wooed by the PRC, the Han, too, had to be coaxed into responding to a mother's call.[20] If both

[20]That "Chinese" abroad would respond to the siren song of Chinese nationalism was never guaranteed (Skinner 1957, 187).

Han as Overseas Chinese and Tibetans as Overseas Chinese are contingent historical constructions, then scholars seeking to understand contemporary Chinese-ness should follow Bruno Latour's suggestion to shift our "attention away from the irrelevant difference between what is constructed and not constructed, toward the crucial difference between what is well or badly constructed, well or badly composed" (2010, 3).

Sojourn Work III: Trans/nationalists before the Nation-State

Whereas Skinner, Wang, and Tan describe the importance of the territorial nation-state to the promulgation of transnational sentiment in the early Republican era, Karl and Duara describe the crucial role played by trans-imperial populations and circuits in the birthing of territorial and extraterritorial Chinese nationalisms in the late Qing. Karl succinctly describes the intellectual ferment and bodily displacements of the era:

> On the one hand internal breakdown fueled efforts at theorizing the gathering crisis in terms of a new people-state relationship; this theorization, combined with the breakdowns, increasingly destabilized the claims of the dynastic system to represent the correct relational unity among politics, learning and Chinese-ness…. On the other hand, after the 1898 coup, a considerable portion of Chinese nationalist theorizing and mobilizing took place outside the territorial bounds of the Qing Empire and the first direct targets of mobilization were often Chinese who resided outside of these boundaries. (2002, 53)

Such mobilization was not an easy, predictable, or guaranteed process, given the fractiousness of "Chinese communities" abroad. Prospective reformers did not simply find "Chinese" people abroad, draw on their natural patriotism, and yoke them effortlessly to the glorious cause of the Chinese nation-state. Instead, such efforts relied on a "recoding of Chinese abroad into a new national imaginary of 'the people' and of their obligations toward the weakened [Qing] state" (Karl 2002, 56). This was a process of rendering Chinese overseas "plausibly part of contemporary Chinese nationalist praxis" (Karl 2002, 71), the active making in other words of Potter's "conditions of commonality" prerequisite to the making of national consciousness in both territorialized and deterritorialized variants.

This process transformed constructed, political categories into the ahistorical divisions of nature (Karl 2002, 57). The Chinese-ness that had emerged historically as a political category or orientation—a tool to get the "Teochiu, Cantonese, or whatever" living outside the territories of the Qing onto the same nationalist page—was, in the process, transmuted into an eternal ethnic verity, the Overseas (Han) Chinese. The nationalist affinities of would-be transnational populations

were thus the products of nationalist agitation and circulation, not their causes. Crucial in all of this was the category of *huaqiao* itself. A close look at the term's development makes it clear that so-called "transnational" narratives of racial and cultural Chinese-ness and constructions of the Chinese nation-state itself were both birthed in the late imperial period between 1898 and 1911 and were nurtured by related sets of proto-nationalist reform movements (Wang 1981a, 123–24). The quest to forge a mature Overseas Chinese community was also the quest to forge a homeland—a Chinese nation-state to which this overseas community could construct its relationship of distanced interest.

Duara (1997) illustrates the degree to which early forms of *huaqiao* were caught up in the various trans-imperially circulating, proto-nationalist reform movements in the late Qing, each with their own visions of the proper nature of the imperial polity and its future form. He follows Wang (1991b) in employing *huaqiao* to refer to a particular mode of Chinese immigration rather than the "diaspora" as a whole. Wang describes at least three historical modes of Chinese mobility. Two of these modes, the *huashang* or Chinese trader mode and the *huagong* or Chinese laborer mode, date from the mid-nineteenth century and are rooted in livelihood practices rather than any sort of loyalty to some larger perceived totality of China. *Huaqiao* for Wang is associated with an "influx of nationalist activists and ideology at the end of the nineteenth century" (Duara 1997, 42).

For Duara *huaqiao* represents a particular project of fixing Chinese "identity in the face of a pre-existing multiplicity" of identities as well as in relation to the conflicting interpretations of Chinese-ness advocated by other contemporary projects of fixing (1997, 40). "*Huaqiao* … was introduced to unify the various terms that the diaspora used to refer to themselves, such as Min Guangren, Min Yueren and Tangren—ways of identifying the people of Guangdong and Fujian" (Duara 1997, 42). *Huaqiao* proffered a new larger basis of shared identity in place of the several "simultaneously different communities" into which so-called diaspora populations had previously organized themselves: linguistic groups, surname groupings, and native place and other territorially based groupings (Duara 1997, 40). For Wang and laterally for Duara, then, *huaqiao* was, in relation to other modes of "Chinese immigration," a "new national signifier" (Duara 1997, 42). Yet, at *huaqiao*'s birth, the Chinese nation itself was an aspiration rather than accomplishment (on these two latter terms see Sheehan 1981, 10).

What does it mean to suggest that before the Chinese nation took its ultimate shape *huaqiao* was a national signifier? Might *huaqiao* itself have been more of an aspiration than an accomplishment? Duara attempts to clarify the stakes here by noting that "the new national signifier, *huaqiao*, implied first that the *huaqiao* owed their allegiance to China and the Qing state (and after 1911, to the Republic) and entailed certain legal rights and responsibilities towards the Chinese state" (Duara 1997, 42). Yet I think that there is too easy a slippage here

between nation and state, Qing Empire and Chinese Republic. What was the basis of Chinese-ness before the nation-state? The Qing Empire? Certainly no one writes of the Qing nation or the overseas Qing. Are China and the Qing identical? Contemporary Chinese nationalists and many Western observers answer this question in the affirmative. Yet if we are to take the narratives of revolutionary *huaqiao* activists seriously, they were not.[21]

Duara notes that revolutionaries considered *huaqiao* communities the heirs to the secret societies of Ming loyalists who had opposed Manchu rule from the beginning. As such, *huaqiao* could serve as "the source of China's salvation from the Manchus" (Duara 1997, 52). In these narratives, *huaqiao* were cast as glorious pioneers who continued the legacy of the seafaring early Ming. In such constructions, China and the Qing were emphatically not coterminous; the Manchu Qing rulers were not seen as one of the brother *minzu* of today but as alien usurpers. Yet we seem to have no qualms about projecting our serial logics of Chinese-ness back into the pre-national past.

During the last few years of Qing rule, the partisans of imperial, reformist, and revolutionary projects of Chinese prospects (projects that sought to mold a possible future) all attempted to activate networks of extraterritorial loyalty, jostling for potential supporters for their versions of the future of the Qing state as well as for the potential Chinese-nesses these versions entailed. All three shared an emphasis on reorienting scattered populations towards the "*fons et origo*" of the central, "Chinese" state and its future prospects—an emphasis, that is, on recasting the disparate hopes of scattered populations in terms of a collective, *Chinese* destiny. Duara terms this reorientation a process of "re-sinicizing" (1997, 40). I suggest it simultaneously represents projects of sojourn work and nation work that were qualitatively new rather than latent potentialities reactivated. Moreover, rather than simply assuming the national content of these projects of (re-)centralization, we should bring the legacies of Qing colonial expansion more clearly into focus.

The Empire, Overseas?

Late Qing attempts to mobilize "Chinese" communities abroad need to be contextualized in light of "domestic" projects of shoring up the imperial government after the fifteen-year struggle to defeat the Taiping rebellion. Crossley (2005) suggests that in the "military struggle of the 1850s and the subsequent struggle for economic recovery in the 1870s, a progressively programmatic 'Confucian' orthodoxy was set against putative heterodoxies…." Only at this point in

[21]In this respect, if not in broader ethos, they are paralleled by recent advances in "the new Qing imperial history " which, rejecting nationalist teleologies, take that regime as an example of a colonial power. For an overview, see Waley-Cohen (2004). Tuttle (2005) deals with the Republican period rather than the Qing but evinces a similar approach.

time through this example of "tradition by invention, a broad based conscious use of communications and educational institutions" was a "novel ideological conflation of the Qing empire with 'China' and of putative Chinese traditions (foremost 'Confucianism') with the Qing court" forged. Much of "traditional Chinese culture" is thus, for Crossley, the product of the civil wars of the nineteenth century (Crossley 2005, 143). The point here is not simply that the narrative of an eternal, deterritorialized, Confucian China is problematic, but, more tellingly, that the ideological conflation of "China" and the Qing was the contingent result of particular historical trajectories. In turn these historical trajectories and the ideologies of community (national, imperial, or whatever) that they inspired played important roles in the shaping of projects of *huaqiao* identity across state boundaries at the end of the Qing as nations and trans-nations together emerged from the ruins of the empire.

In this context, we should not forget that the presence of the diverse array of peoples within the People's Republic is directly attributable to the colonial expansion undertaken by the Manchu in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that added large swaths of territory to the map of the empire. The legacy of Qing colonial expansion has shaped Chinese nationalism in crucial ways. Specifically, the difficulty of transforming a vast, diverse, and polylingual empire ruled by non-Han "outsiders" into a viable Han-dominated nation-state has led to an obsession with preserving the geobody of the Qing—an obsession with trying to render the Chinese nation and the territory of the Qing imperium isomorphic. Only by making the Qing and the PRC one and the same can China legitimate its claims to Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan. Contemporary China is thus in many ways an empire in the guise of a nation-state (Bockman 1998; Bulag 2006; Harrell 2001; Mongia 2003,).

Consequent to these projects of preserving the Qing in national form has been, in Crossley's terms, a retroactive "nativization" of the Manchus (2005, 148) at odds with early nationalists' racist rationales for overthrowing the Qing. This conjuring trick is the illusion that lies at the heart of rhetorics of eternal China. While the PRC has adopted the Republican project of preserving the geobody of the empire, it has also sought to extend this project beyond the nation's borders—to project its multiethnic national project into transnational space. Crossley's argument is, thus, as crucial to our understandings of contemporary *transnational* forms of Chinese-ness as it is to their national counterparts.

Both ethnically singular and ethnically plural versions of Chinese nationalism (territorial and extraterritorial alike) date back to the proto-nationalist ferment of the late imperial moment. This period was marked by ongoing debate about which of two alternative forms a potential national successor to the Qing polity should take: an ethnically plural state that would preserve the borders of the empire or a monoethnic country for the Han that would occupy a much reduced territorial footprint. Suisheng Zhao notes the key role played by the famous late Qing intellectual and political reformer Liang Qichao in the promulgation of both:

> After traveling to the United States and Japan in 1903, Liang came to define a nation as the natural outcome of the tendency of human beings to gather into progressively larger groups akin to one another for purposes of self-defense. Distinctively, a state could encompass more than one nation and a nation could also be scattered over many states. In this regard, Liang invented two Chinese terms, *da minzu zhuyi* (large nationalism) and *xiao minzu zhuyi* (small nationalism), and explained that "small nationalism is the Han nation as opposed to the other nations (*tazu*) in the country. Large nationalism is the various nations within the country as opposed to the various nations abroad (*guowai zhi zhuzu*)." Apparently, Liang's large nationalism was comparable to state nationalism and small nationalism comparable to ethnic nationalism. (Zhao 2004, 65–66)

While Liang advocated a post-Qing polity on the large nationalism model, other late Qing reformers and revolutionaries pushed for a nation-state of and for the Han. Inside "China" after the tumult of the warlord and early nationalist periods, the question of the nature of Chinese nationalism was resolved in favor of *da minzu zhuyi* with Sun Yat-sen's hybrid (and assimilationist) but functionally large nationalist "Five nations, one family" (*wuzu yijia*) policy (Leibold 2004). The PRC has since oscillated from endorsing multiethnic "unity in diversity" to dismissing ethnicity as bourgeois but throughout has sought to preserve the territory of the Qing. Beyond the "mainland," however, Liang's small nationalism has held sway—not a surprising outcome given the early anti-Manchu stance of many migrants to the *nanyang*.

Surprising, perhaps, is the degree to which the co-parentage of Liang's large and small nationalisms has dropped from view. While large nationalism has remained clearly the constructed product of human action, small nationalism has been naturalized—the hard work that went into the making of a pan-linguistic and pan-regional Han identity effaced and Han nationalism projected back into the timeless mists of Confucian China. Small nationalism has been naturalized outside the boundaries of the empire even as large nationalism became ascendant atop the ruins of the Qing. Thus we are confronted with the bizarre spectacle, one hundred years after the fall of the empire, of Chinese-ness on the imperial model inside the nation-state and Chinese-ness on the anti-Manchu model outside its bounds. On this paradoxical terrain, PRC efforts to turn Tibetans abroad into avatars of the nation-state can be seen as both novel attempts to bring the empire overseas and familiar projects of creating nationalist aspirations in unlikely locations.

Conclusion: Denaturalizing Overseas Chinese-ness

Scholars must take seriously such contemporary state endeavors to project the PRC's multiethnic national project onto transnational terrain. Doing so

requires that we treat attempts to hail Tibetans living outside the PRC as either "*Huaqiao*" or "Overseas Tibetan compatriots" and to turn returned Tibetans into "real Chinese citizens" as instances of sojourn work comparable to the efforts that transformed the "Chinese overseas" into the "Overseas Chinese." To say that these are similar sorts of processes is not to say that the sojourns and sojourners they produce are fully commensurate, nor is it, necessarily, to endorse the nationalist concerns behind such attempts. Yet, I argue, a hard distinction between the making of majority and minority sojourners only works if one dehistoricizes the concurrent emergence of large and small nationalisms. Only by turning them from intimately connected contemporaries into historical ancestor (small) and successor (large), can ethnic (small) nationalism be naturalized in contrast to an "obviously" constructed civic (large) nationalism.

Where some scholars see these two versions of Chinese-ness as separate and opposed, I have argued that territorial and extraterritorial modes of Chinese community are, as the literal translation of the Chinese word for compatriots (*tongbao*) would have it, "co-uterines" (Dikötter 2005, 191). They were birthed by a common set of forces and journeying practices in the proto-nationalist ferment of the late Qing. Further, if the Chinese nation-state and its possible trans-nations had their birth in the extraterritorial itineraries of ideas and agitators in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the connections between national (territorial) and transnational (extraterritorial) Chinese-ness did not end there. Drawing on works by Skinner and Wang, I have highlighted the role of the territorial state in the sojourn work that went into creating the "conditions of commonality" necessary to the cultivation of nationalist sentiment outside the territorial bounds of the nascent Chinese nation-state.

By revealing the constructedness and contingency of Han-centric visions of Overseas Chinese-ness, by historicizing and de*naturalizing*, that is, primordialist understandings of Overseas Chinese-ness that posit the Han abroad as always already Overseas Chinese, I demonstrate in this essay that an opposition between Han as natural Overseas Chinese and Tibetan as unnatural Overseas Chinese is untenable because the Chinese-ness of both groups is precisely *un*natural, a fiction in the Geertzian sense of being humanly made. That is, Chinese ethnic nationalism is itself also civic. Thus any distinction between the Han as an unproblematic or natural category in contrast to the messy fictions of civic Chinese-ness can no longer hold.

If we see Chinese-ness in all instances as processual rather than inherent, the contingency of both civic and ethnic nationalisms becomes clear. The import of this claim is that neither dismissing the possibility of multiethnic *huaqiao* as a sterile, slightly freakish hybrid as Tu or Bulag would have us do, nor uncritically celebrating the harmony of the multiethnic Chinese trans/nation as the PRC exhorts is adequate to understand the intimacies of contemporary Chinese state-transnationalisms—official nationalist projects that exceed national boundaries.

Projects that seek to cast Tibetans abroad as Overseas Chinese bridge the gap between two modes of Chinese-ness, one territorial, multiethnic, and, in nationalist terms, civic, the other extraterritorial, monoethnic, and primordialist, that to this point have been both cause and product of an academic division of labor in sinological inquiry. Today the anthropology of China is divided into at least two distinct streams that rarely commingle: an anthropology of China as multi-"ethnic" nation state and an anthropology of transnational Chinese communities often discussed in terms of "Confucian Capitalism" or other similar rubrics. These two apparently divergent anthropologies can no longer operate in isolation. In order to properly understand the intimate relationship between nation and transnational forms of community in the contemporary PRC, we must begin to reconcile ethnic and national understandings of Chinese-ness. This has been a guiding motivation in my own work; I originally was inspired to do research on northwest China by recent works on the PRC as a multiethnic nation-state by authors such as Harrell, Gladney, Litzinger, Mueggler, and Schein. Over the last two decades or so, a vibrant English-language anthropological literature has begun to trace the contours of human difference in the People's Republic.

In theory, these works on the ethnic diversity of contemporary China should provide leverage for opening up notions of essential Chinese-ness to critical rethinking. Yet for the most part this has not happened. I think the ineffectiveness of this critique is in no small part the result of the failure of anthropological studies of Chinese minority peoples to engage with the literature on the "Overseas Chinese." By assuming that critiquing Chinese-ness in a national context is sufficient, they have failed to grapple sufficiently with either the ethno-cultural essentialisms of diasporic intellectuals and scholars or the co-parentage and continuing intimacies of territorial and extraterritorial modes of Chinese nationalism. Thus even as detail is added to our picture of the human diversity of the People's Republic, essentialized and dehistoricized versions of Chinese-ness remain in circulation. This essay has been motivated by the failure of the Chinese minority studies' critique. In order to really "dislocat[e] China," (Gladney 2004)—to historicize and "provincialize" (Chakrabarty 2000) tenacious common-sense equations of China with a particular racio-cultural eth(n)os—we must bring national and transnational anthropologies of China together, grounding each in histories of empire.

Acknowledgments

Research in China from 2003 to 2004 and again in 2006, 2007, and 2009 was made possible by a Fulbright IIE Fellowship, a UC Berkeley Center for Chinese Studies Graduate Research Fellowship, a CAORC Multi-country Research Fellowship, and Hamilton College Junior Faculty Research Funds. My thinking on this topic has benefited from questions and comments offered in response to the presentation of earlier

versions of this essay at Berkeley and Hamilton, as well at conferences in Binghamton, Hilton Head, and Paris. My thanks also to the many friends and colleagues whose generous readings have strengthened the argument. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Kathleen Poling and Dar Rudnyckyj for their detailed comments. I also thank Lawrence Cohen, Cristiana Giordano, Laura Hubbard, Kevin Karpiak, Ben Peacock, Lucinda Ramberg, and Fouzieyha Towghi for offering their thoughts and encouragement. Liu Xin and Jenny T. Chio have also played significant roles in the course of my intellectual engagement with China anthropology. Aihwa Ong provided important guidance at a crucial stage of the project. The suggestions of Jeffrey Wasserstrom and *JAS*'s three anonymous reviewers improved the essay immensely. The responsibility for any remaining errors is entirely my own.

List of References

Ahearn, Emily Martin, and Hill Gates, eds. 1981. *The Anthropology of Taiwanese Society*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Axel, Brian Keith. 2001. *The Nation's Tortured Body: Representation, and the Formation of a Sikh "Diaspora."* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Bockman, Harald. 1998. "China Deconstruct? The Future of the Chinese Empire-State in a Historical Perspective." In *Reconstructing Twentieth-Century China: State Control, Civil Society, and National Identity*, eds. Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard and David Strand, 310–46. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Brown, Melissa, ed. 1996. *Negotiating Ethnicities in China and Taiwan*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

——. 2004. *Is Taiwan Chinese: The Impact of Culture, Power, and Migration on Changing Identities*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Bulag, Uradyn E. 2002. *The Mongols at China's Edge: History and the Politics of National Unity*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.

——. 2006. "Going Imperial: Tibeto-Mongolian Buddhism and Nationalisms in China and Inner Asia." In *Empire to Nation, Historical Perspectives on the Making of the Modern World*, eds. Joseph W. Esherick, Hasan Kayalı, and Eric Van Young, 260–95. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.

Callahan, William. 2003. "Beyond Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism." *International Organization* 57(3):481–517.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

China Tibet Information Center. n.d.a. "100 Questions and Answers about Tibet." http://www.tibetinfor.com/tibetzt/question_e/5/094.htm (accessed July 21, 2010).

——. n.d.b "Xizang Zizhiqu dui Huiguo Tanqin Zangbao Jiedai Guanli Gongzuo de Kaizhan Qingkuang." http://zt.tibet.cn/zhengfu/zheng200242393642.htm (accessed January 13, 2010).

Chow, Kai-wing. 1997. "Imagining Boundaries of Blood: Zhang Binglin and the Invention of the Han 'Race' in Modern China." In *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*, ed. Frank Dikötter, 34–53. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

——. 2001. "Narrating Nation, Race and National Culture: Imagining the Hanzu Identity in Modern China." In *Constructing Nationhood in Modern East Asia*, eds.

Kai-Wing Chow, K. Doak, and P. Fu, 47–83. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Crossley, Pamela Kyle. 2005. "Nationality and Difference in China: The Post-Imperial Dilemma." In *The Teleology of the Modern Nation-State: Japan and China*, ed. Joshua A. Fogel, 138–58. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Davis, Susan. 2005. *Song and Silence*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Diemujiangteng. n.d. "Huidao Women de Guxiang" [Returning to Our Hometown]. *Zhongguo Minzu Zazhi.* http://www.56-china.com.cn/mztj/2/yi3-3M11.htm#; (accessed November 22, 2009).

Dikötter, Frank. 1992. *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

——. 2005. "Race in China." In *China Inside Out: Contemporary Chinese Nationalism and Transnationalism*, eds. Pál Nyíri and Joana Breidenbach, 177–204. New York: Central European University Press.

Duara, Prasenjit. 1997. "Nationalists among Transnationals: Overseas Chinese and the Idea of China 1900–1911." In *Ungrounded Empires: The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism*, eds. Aihwa Ong and Donald Nonini, 39–60. New York: Routledge.

Freedman, Maurice. 1979 [1964]. "The Chinese in Southeast Asia: A Longer View." In *The Study of Chinese Society: Essays by Maurice Freedman*, 3–21. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

——. 1979. *The Study of Chinese Society: Essays by Maurice Freedman*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Gallison, Peter. 2003. "Specific Theory." *Critical Inquiry*. http://criticalinquiry.uchicago.edu/issues/v30/30n2.Galison.html (accessed July 21, 2010).

Gladney, Dru C. 1991. *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Council on East Asian Studies.

—— 1994. "Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Minority/Majority Identities." *Journal of Asian Studies* 53(1):92–123.

—— 2004. *Dislocating China: Reflections on Muslims, Minorities, and Other Subaltern Subjects*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Guo, Yingjie. 2003. *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary China: The Search for National Identity under Reform*. New York: Routledge.

Hall, Stuart. 1996 [1986]. "What Is This Black in Black Popular Culture." In *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, eds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, 465–75. New York: Routledge.

Harrell, Stevan. 1990. "Ethnicity, Local Interests and the State: Yi Communities in Southwest China." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32(3):515–48.

——. ed. 1995. *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

——. 2001. *Ways of Being Ethnic in Southwest China*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Hsiao, Frank S.T., and Lawrence R. Sullivan. 1979. "The Chinese Communist Party and the Status of Taiwan, 1928–1943." *Pacific Affairs* 52(3):446–67.

Karl, Rebecca E. 2002. *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Latour, Bruno. 2010. "An Attempt at Writing a Compositionist Manifesto." http://www.bruno-latour.fr/articles (accessed July 22, 2010).

Leibold, James. 2004. "Positioning 'Minzu' within Sun Yat-sen's Discourse of *Minzuzhuyi*." *Journal of Asian History* 38(2):163–213.

——. 2010a. "The Beijing Olympics and China's Conflicted National Form." *The China Journal* 63:1–24.

——. 2010b. "More than a Category: Han Supremacism on the Chinese Internet." *The China Quarterly* 203:539–59.

Litzinger, Ralph. 1998. "Memory Work: Reconstituting the Ethnic in Post-Mao China." *Cultural Anthropology* 13(2):224–55.

——. 2000. *Other Chinas: The Yao and the Politics of National Belonging*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Mair, Victor. 2005. "The North(west)ern Peoples and the Recurrent Origins of the 'Chinese' State." In *The Teleology of the Modern Nation-State: Japan and China*, ed. Joshua A. Fogel, 46–86. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Makley, Charlene E. 2007. *The Violence of Liberation: Gender and Tibetan Buddhist Revival in Post-Mao China*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Malkki, Liisa. 1997 [1992]. "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees." In *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations In Critical Anthropology*, eds. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, 52–74. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

McKeown, Adam. 2001. *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900–1936*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mongia, Radhika. 2003. "Race, Nationality, Mobility: A History of the Passport." In *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation*, ed. Antoinette M. Burton, 196–213. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Mueggler, Erik. 2001. *The Age of Wild Ghosts: Memory, Violence, and Place in Southwest China*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Mullaney, Thomas S., Stéphane Gros, James Leibold, and Eric Vanden Bussche, eds. 2012. *Critical Han Studies: The History, Representation, and Identity of China's Majority*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Ong, Aihwa. 1999. *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Ong, Aihwa, and Donald M. Nonini, eds. 1997. *Ungrounded Empires: The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism*. New York: Routledge.

Potter, David M. 1973. "Historians and the Problem of Large-Scale Community Formation." In *History and American Society: Essays of David M. Potter*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Rack, Mary. 2005. *Ethnic Distinctions, Local Meanings: Negotiating Cultural Identities in China*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Pluto Press.

Sautman, Barry. 1997. "Myths of Descent, Racial Nationalism and Ethnic Minorities in the People's Republic of China." In *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*, ed. Frank Dikötter, 75–95. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Schein, Louisa. 2000. *Minority Rules: The Miao and the Feminine in China's Cultural Politics*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Sheehan, James J. 1981. "What Is German History? Reflections on the Role of the Nation in German History and Historiography." *The Journal of Modern History* 53(1):2–23.

Siu, Paul C. P. 1952. "The Sojourner." *The American Journal of Sociology* 58(1):34–44.

Skinner, G. William. 1957. *Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Tu, Wei-ming. 2005 [1991]. "Cultural China: Periphery as the Center." *Daedalus* 134(4): 145–67.

Tuttle, Gray. 2005. *Tibetan Buddhists in the Making of Modern China*. New York: Columbia University Press.

van Slyke, Lyman P. 1970. "The United Front in China." *The Journal of Contemporary History* 5(3):119–35.

Waley-Cohen, Joanna. 2004. "The New Qing History," *Radical History Review* 88:193–206 (winter).

Wang Gungwu. 1981a [1976a]. "A Note on the Origins of Hua-Ch'iao." In *Community and Nation: Essays on Southeast Asia and the Chinese*, 118–27. Singapore: Asian Studies Association of Australia.

——. 1981b [1976b]. "The Limits of Nanyang Chinese Nationalism 1912–1937." In *Community and Nation: Essays on Southeast Asia and the Chinese*, 142–58. Singapore: Asian Studies Association of Australia.

——. 1991a [1985]. "External China as a New Policy Area." In *China and the Overseas Chinese*, 222–39. Singapore: Times Academic Press.

——. 1991b [1989]. "Patterns of Chinese Migration in Historical Perspective." In *China and the Overseas Chinese*, 3–21. Singapore: Times Academic Press.

Wong, Edward. 2009. "Tibetan Monks Tell Tale of Escape From China." *The New York Times*, June 20. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/21/world/asia/21tibet.html?ref=edward_wong (accessed July 27, 2010).

Zhao, Suisheng. 2004. *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.