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**Competing Narratives of Racial Unity in Republican China:
From the Yellow Emperor to Peking Man**

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Abstract

Following Prasenjit Duara's strategy for "de-constructing China," this article traces the development of several competing narratives of national unity and origin during the formative Republican era (1911-1949) of Chinese history. Faced with the difficult task of incorporating the heterogeneous peoples of the Qing Empire into the new Chinese nation-state, Han Chinese intellectuals looked backwards into their own history for scientific proof of this unitary national imaginary. The article focuses on the tension between, on the one hand, a racial formulation which placed the source of Chinese unity in the "common origin" (*tongyuan*) of its people and, on the other hand, a more subjective formulation which located this unity in the gradual, evolutionary "melding" (*ronghe*) of several distinct cultures and races into a new national consciousness. In the process, it highlights the role social scientific discourses – as institutionalized in the disciplines of history, archaeology and ethnology – played in the construction of national identity in twentieth century China.

Biodata

Dr James Leibold is a Lecturer in Asian Studies at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia. He has a strong interest in the role of ethnicity, race and national identity in 20th century Chinese history and society. His doctoral research, completed in 2003 at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, explores the discourse on the *Zhonghua minzu* (Chinese nation/race) in early 20th century China and the positioning of its ethnic minorities in the construction of Chinese nationalism. He is currently revising his dissertation for publication.

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To most observers, China appears a uniquely bounded and indivisible entity with a long and unbroken history as a single, unified civilization. Eminent English historian Eric Hobsbawm is not alone in claiming that China (like Korea and Japan) “are indeed among the extremely rare examples of historic states composed of a population that is ethnically almost or entirely homogenous” (Hobsbawm, 1990: 66). Recent archaeological discoveries have revealed the highly advanced nature of the civilization that took root in the Yellow River valley over five thousand years ago. With its stratified social order, plant and animal domestication and sophisticated bronze tools, this civilization, in the words of best-selling author and academic Jared Diamond, had a “disproportionate” influence on its neighboring peoples, drawing them into an “ancient melting pot” and creating today’s political, cultural and linguistic monolith. It was the “civilizing superiority” of this culture that led the doyen of American Sinology, John Fairbank, to conclude that by the beginning of its written history “the Chinese people had already achieved a degree of cultural homogeneity and isolated continuity hard to match elsewhere in the world” (Fairbank, 1992: 44-45). Contending that it is slightly absurd to ask how China became Chinese, Jared Diamond states, “China has *been* Chinese, almost from the beginnings of its recorded history” (Diamond, 1998: 323 original emphasis). This article, in contrast, calls into question the intimate, and I would contend unhealthy, relationship between the teleology of Chinese cultural continuity and the modern Chinese discourse of nationalism.

Scholars in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) refer to their ancient civilization and its people as the *Zhonghua minzu* or the Chinese nation/race.¹ While admitting that consciousness of this distinct people only developed in the course of

the country's resistance against Western imperialism, the founder of modern Chinese ethnology, Fei Xiaotong, has argued that the *Zhonghua minzu* has a long history which is rooted in over five thousand years of "racial melding" (*minzu ronghe*) (Fei, 1989: 29-33). For the Chinese Party-state, the term *Zhonghua minzu* refers not only to the unity of the fifty-six officially recognized "nationalities" (*minzu*) living in China today but also to the countless ethnonyms recorded throughout the annals of Chinese history and active within the territorial entity of "historic China," or what Thongchai Winichakul (1994) has called the "geo-body." In demarcating the boundary between the Chinese "Self" and foreign "Other," national history plays a particularly important role in creating "the false unity of a self-same, national subject evolving through time" (Duara, 1995: 4).

Historians have only recently begun to unpack the numerous ethnic boundaries that crisscross the Chinese body politic and its long history. Academic experts, not to mention the lay observer, are often guilty of projecting China's current state of unity backwards in time, blurring the various ethnic and cultural boundaries which operated throughout Chinese history. By privileging the current PRC discourse on the *Zhonghua minzu* and its bounded ethnic fragments (Han, Mongol, Tibet, etc.), a generation of scholars have largely overlooked the highly contested and fluid nature of cultural identity in China and the crucial role its ethnic penumbra has played in the construction and contestation of Chinese national identity. Dru Gladney has perceptively argued that the politics of ethnic representation in contemporary China has more to do with the reification of an undefined "Han" majority as "united, monoethnic and modern" than it does with the minorities themselves (Gladney, 1994: 93). In a similar fashion, Prasenjit Duara has questioned the privileging of the nation as a bounded and collective subject of history, calling instead for a bifurcating of

linear national history to expose the unstable and historically contingent network of representations that underpin the master narrative of the Chinese nation (Duara, 1995: 3-50).

Following Duara's strategy for "de-constructing China" (Duara 1996), this article traces the development of several competing narratives of national unity and origin during the formative Republican era of Chinese history. Faced with the difficulty of incorporating the heterogeneous population of the Qing empire into the new Chinese nation-state, Han Chinese intellectuals looked backwards into their own history for scientific proof of this national unity. It is at times of rapid social transformation, Hobsbawm points out, that nations "invent" new traditions to create a sense of continuity with the past (Hobsbawm, 1983: 4-5). My study focuses on the tension between, on the one hand, a racial formulation which places the source of Chinese unity in the "common origin" (*tongyuan*) of its people and, on the other hand, a more subjective formulation which locates this unity in the gradual, evolutionary "melding" (*ronghe*) of several distinct peoples into a new national consciousness and culture. Both these narratives were set within the discourse of nationalism in Republican China, namely the attempt by Han Chinese intellectuals and state officials to foster a sense of national belonging and unity among the ethnically diverse subjects of the Qing empire. Frank Dikötter makes a useful distinction between racial and cultural nationalism in one of his more recent discussions of national identity in twentieth century China. He speaks of them as two distinct, yet often overlapping, strategies for conceptualizing the nation-state. In both strategies the nation is imagined as a unique entity with a common history, territory, culture and blood. Yet, racial nationalism emphasizes the importance of blood ties and the racial bond created through common descent from a shared ancestor, while cultural

nationalism privileges cultural features which bind individuals together in an organic and dynamic entity (Dikötter, 1996: 590-1).

Despite its usefulness, Dikötter's dichotomy becomes overly essentialized and problematic when he associates cultural nationalism with the attempt to meld tradition and modernity together in an evolutionary vision of the Chinese community, and racial nationalism with the iconoclastic rejection of tradition and culture while imagining a uniquely modern sense of national identity (Dikötter, 1996: 591). The fluidness of nationalist thought in China defies rigid distinctions between tradition and modernity, religion and science, conservative and progressive. Modernization in China was not a linear and teleological process but rather a complex and relational dialogue between past, present and future. This article explores two of the different narrative strategies for dealing with the problem of ethnic diversity in Republican China and attempts to highlight the role of new scientific disciplines (such as history, archaeology, paleontology, anthropology, sociology and ethnography) in authenticating myths of national belonging. As such, it heeds the cautionary note of Tze-ki Hon and others about making an overly simplistic distinction between a group of "modern" and "progressive" May Fourth Intellectuals and a "traditional" and "regressive" group of conservative intellectuals in early 20th century China (Hon, 2004: 506-08). Edward Q Wang (2000) has demonstrated how May Fourth intellectuals combine tradition and modernity in their approach to historiography. Yet, as Alex Schneider (2002) has pointed out in his review of Wang's book, it is easy to fall into the trap of reductionist thinking when writing about Republican era intellectual trends. Its rich intellectual milieu included a wide variety of strategies for obtaining modernity, of which some were co-opted by the Chinese state while others were marginalized, becoming what David Der-wei Wang (1997) has called "repressed

modernities.” At different times, these narratives of national identity work in parallel with state aims while at others time they operated in conflict. Like Duara, I find it helpful to think about the construction of national identity in modern China as a dynamic process of transmission and dispersion, that is the transmission of historically-based notions of political and cultural communities and the dispersal of these representations over time and space according to present needs (Duara 1995, 51-82).

THE MANCHURIAN INCIDENT & THE RISING TIDE OF CHINESE NATIONALISM

The incredible speed and ease with which the Japanese imperial army invaded China’s four northeastern provinces following the 18 September 1931 Manchurian Incident rocked the national mood in China. The event was a large source of embarrassment for the Chinese people as they watched the Kwantung Army occupy this former frontier tributary which now represented nearly one-fifth of the Republic’s territory. The cries for armed resistance increased as the Japanese army advanced to within thirteen miles of Beiping in May of 1933. Yet, Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist Government refused to become entangled in a war with the Japanese before it had defeated the Chinese Communists and consolidated his authority over the regional warlords. Seeking to appease the Japanese, Nanjing agreed to the humiliating terms of the Tangku Truce, which granted Japan *de facto* control over the northern provinces of Hebei and Chahar.

The Manchurian Incident and the sense of national emergency that developed in its wake elicited a series of contradictory responses from the Chinese intelligentsia. Many of the May Fourth intellectuals strengthened their commitment to

the “enlightenment project” (*qimeng yundong*), convinced that only Western science and democracy could foster a genuine spirit of national unity and resistance among the Chinese people. Others, however, looked inward towards traditional culture, arguing that China lacked the moral fiber and national identity necessary to withstand the Japanese invasion, and echoed Sun Yat-sen’s 1924 call for a revival of China’s lost *minzuzhuyi*, which carried with it the ambiguous connotation of both “racialism” and “nationalism” (Schwarcz, 1986: 195-239). One of the leading voices within this “national salvation movement” (*jiuguo yundong*) was Shao Yuanchong, a veteran of Sun Yat-sen’s Tongmenghui and the Western Hills Clique that objected to the First United Front between the Nationalists and the Communists. Writing less than a month after the Manchurian Incident, Shao claimed the invasion provided China with a historic opportunity to cultivate a new “*minzu spirit*” (*minzu jingsheng*). “We have met with this danger and difficulty,” Shao wrote, “because our entire *minzu* lacks sufficient training and preparation in *minzu* consciousness” (Shao, 1931: 235). Shao pointed his finger at the excessive self-indulgence of the May Fourth Movement, arguing that patriotism rather than individualism, and spiritualism rather than materialism was China’s only road towards national salvation.

The growing tide of nationalism in 1930's China needs to be placed not only within the context of Japanese imperialism but also the conservative backlash against the cultural iconoclasm of the May Fourth Movement (Guo, 2004: 21-3; Schwarcz, 1986: 214-222). According to a growing number of academics and state officials, the May Fourth generation’s ethic of “self-doubt” (*huaiyi ziji*) had degenerated, in the words of Kuomintang party leader Chen Lifu, into an unhealthy and exceedingly pessimistic “loathing of the past,” “lack of interest in the present,” and “lack of concern for the future” (Chen Lifu, 1934: 177). Because the Chinese

people were what Sun Yat-sen called “a sheet of loose sand” (*yipian sansha*), they were easily set asunder when faced with a solid and unified Japanese attack. In his 1924 lectures on *minzuzhuyi*, Sun Yat-sen stressed that the revival of China’s unique cultural tradition was the key to restoring national self-confidence and unity. If the Chinese wanted to regain their “*minzu* spirit,” Sun argued that it was crucial to first “reawaken the learning as well as the traditional morality that we once possessed” (Sun, 1924b: 247). Throughout the 1930's, officials and intellectuals closely associated with the Kuomintang kept Sun’s legacy of nationalism alive, repeatedly calling for the arousal of China’s lost “*minzu* consciousness” (*minzu yizhi*), advocating “*minzu* thought” (*minzu sixiang*), and stressing the urgent need for a new “*minzu* spirit” (*minzu jingshen*) in the quest for China’s “*minzu* liberation” (*minzu jiefang*).

For many Chinese nationalists the Japanese invasion of Manchuria required an urgent shift of attention away from personal enlightenment and towards the troubled fate of the entire *minzu*. Manchuria had been occupied and now the Japanese were appealing to the Mongols, Chinese Muslims and others frontier minorities to “liberate” themselves from the yoke of Chinese domination. Only by fostering a single identity from amongst China’s numerous parochial, class and ethnic identities could the Chinese nation ensure its continued existence in the Darwinian struggle for the “survival of the fittest” among nation-states. Shao Yuanchong and others viewed human evolution through the same Darwinian glasses as Sun Yat-sen. Human history was the story of “*minzu* competition” (*minzu jingzheng*) with different social groups struggling for evolutionary survival. Because of this struggle, people with similar blood, language, religion and customs needed to unite together in forming the largest and healthiest *minzu* possible (Shao, 1933a:

365-69; Shao 1932b: 254 ff). The Manchurian Incident demonstrated that the Chinese *minzu* was debilitated and divided and in desperate need of national reconstruction; if China hoped to reverse its slow walk toward “the death of the state and the extinction of the race” (*wangguo miezu*), it needed to follow Sun’s advice for restoring its national wellbeing.

What constituted an evolutionary healthy *minzu*? At times Shao argued that it took more than a common bloodline, language, and set of customs to unite together in a strong and cohesive *minzu*. It also required a common consciousness centered around a single “national culture” (*minzu wenhua*) and “national education” (*minzu jiaoyu*). Shao Yuanchong argued that each *minzu* possessed its own unique culture and China’s was located in the traditional Confucian values of benevolence (*ren*), knowledge (*zhi*), courage (*yong*), and loyalty (*zhong*). The cultivation of these unique virtues among the Chinese people would provide them with the necessary self-confidence to face their current national crisis (Shao, 1930: 211-8; Shao, 1936: 421-7). The key to inculcating these values was the implementation of *minzu* education. Shao argued that the purpose of education was to “discipline and cultivate the masses, so as to provide them with a rich national consciousness and morality, and the appropriate knowledge and abilities needed to undertake the responsibility for reconstructing their *minzu*” (Shao, 1934a: 392). It was crucial, however, that a country’s educational system had a central focus: the *minzu*. The ultimate goal of education was to cause a person to “understand their own position, their own country, and their own ancestors” (Shao, 1934b: 218-19).

In short, the purpose of education in China was to foster an understanding of one’s “Chineseness,” its unique culture, long historical tradition and common destiny. In many ways historical memory was at the center of both “national culture” and

“national education.” Without a correct understanding of one’s past, it was impossible to resist the present oppression: “If a majority of (a country’s) people do not understand that they have a fatherland (*zuguo*); do not know they have a history; do not know the spirit of hardship with which their ancestors built on; and do not know the beauty of their own culture” Shao wrote in 1933, “it becomes easy for country A to look down on country B as their slaves and for country C to have their land occupied and have to follow the orders of country D” (Shao, 1933b: 376-83).

While Shao Yuanchong focused on the reconstruction of China’s national spirit, Dai Jitao attempted to draw the nation’s attention to its threatened frontier regions. Dai, who once served as Sun Yat-sen’s personal secretary, had always had a keen interest in the former Qing frontier, and following the establishment of the Nanjing Central Government in 1927, he became one of its top policy advisors on the “frontier question” (*bianjiang wenti*). Echoing his mentor Sun Yat-sen, Dai argued that it was in the frontier region that China’s authority was its weakest and the struggle against foreign imperialism would be won or lost. It was pointless to “save the country” (*jiuguo*) while losing the nearly sixty percent of “Chinese territory” which comprised the former frontier regions of the Qing dynasty. “In attempting to save the country today,” Dai argued, “we absolutely must not abandon the frontier” (Cited in Li Juanli 1992: 337). During the 1930s, Dai gathered together a group of like-minded academics and propagandists to form the New Asia Study Society (*Xinyaxiaya xuehui*) in Nanjing. The mission statement of the Society’s journal, *Xinyaxiaya banyuekan* (*New Asia Bimonthly*), claimed a commitment to the promotion of research on the Three People’s Principles as they apply to both the “frontier question” and the liberation of the “Oriental *minzu*” (*dongfang minzu*) (Anonymous, 1930a: n.p.). Following the Manchurian Incident and increased Japanese

encroachment in northern China, the journal narrowed its focus to the role of the Chinese frontier (in particular Mongolia and the rest of the Northwest) in the “revitalization of the Chinese *minzu*.”²

For Kuomintang nationalists, like Dai Jitao and Shao Yuanchong, the Manchurian Incident heightened the importance of popularizing the fundamental unity of the Chinese nation-state amongst all its citizens. In Prasenjit Duara’s latest book, he reveals several of the strategies Chinese and Japanese nationalist scholars employed to “authenticate” their various claims of sovereignty over this liminal borderland. Drawing on globalized discourses of the modern, as institutionalized in the disciplines of history, anthropology, geology, archaeology and other sciences, nationalist scholars attempted to nationalized the Manchurian frontier for incorporate in either a distinctly Chinese or Japanese geo-body (Duara, 2003). In this struggle for legitimacy, Chinese academics admitted that they were far behind their Japanese counterparts with many of these disciplines in a nascent stage of development in China. With its rich historical tradition, it was only natural that Chinese nationalists turned to history in their attempts to substantiate Chinese claims over Manchuria.

Following the Incident, Tao Xisheng sent an impassioned letter to fellow historian Fu Sinian, claiming that the Japanese occupation of Manchuria represented the first move in an impending “cultural war” (Wang Fan-shen, 2000: 149). Japanese historians, such as Yano Jin’ichi (1931) and Asano Risaburo (1928), were claiming that Manchuria, Tibet and Mongolia were not originally part of Chinese territory while Japanese agents working with Muslim warlord Ma Zhongying in Gansu were calling for all Chinese Muslims to cast off Han oppression and unite together in a Pan-Islamic state (Wang Jianming, 2002, 180).³ In justifying their interference in Chinese affairs, the Japanese argued that the so-called “Republic of China” was a modern

political construct, which was being used to forcefully subjugate the legitimate national aspirations of the former Qing frontier peoples who now desired self-determination and independence from China. By helping establish the independent state of Manchukuo, with the last emperor of the Qing dynasty as its leader, the Japanese claimed to be unselfishly aiding the small and weak races of Asia in resisting traditional Chinese hegemony. To legitimize its claims about Manchuria, Japanese academics marshaled “scientific evidence” aimed at demonstrating the unique history, geography, economy and ethnicity identity of the Manchurian state and people (Shao Dan, 2002: 16-68; Duara, 2003: 53-59; 180-88). Tao Xisheng argued that these false accusations must not go unanswered and urged Fu Sinian and other Chinese historians to write their own national histories.

Fu Sinian and a group of his fellow Chinese historians originally intended to reply with a new, systematic general history of China; yet the exigencies of time lead Fu Sinian to quickly compile a short outline of ancient Manchurian history for submission to the Lytton Commission investigating Japan’s invasion of Manchuria. His *Draft History of Manchuria (Dongbei Shigang)* consciously distorted the evidence in claiming that “the Northeast” (*Dongbei*) had been governed by a Chinese bureaucratic system since the beginning of recorded history (Li Ji, 1932).⁴ Their blatant disregard for historical facts garnered harsh criticism from the academic community in China, with one critic, Miao Fenglin, claiming that despite its short length, the number of historical errors in Fu’s Outline would almost certainly break a record. It was ineffective, the book’s critics argued, to counter the solid scholarship of Japanese historians with bogus and hollow propaganda (Wang Fan-shen, 2000: 150-2). The chief problem for Chinese historians in countering the claims of their Japanese counterparts was the fact that few Chinese dynasties had consistently and

fully controlled the frontier regions of Tibet, Xinjiang, Mongolia and Manchuria throughout China's long recorded history. In the case of Manchuria, Japanese academics and officials were able to argue rather convincingly that Chinese administration only extended throughout the Northeast during the Han and Tang dynasties, and then only in the form of a loose coalition with native rulers. In the end, the Great Wall served as a powerful metaphor for the geographic, ethnic and political divide between Manchuria and China prior to the fall of the Qing dynasty, making it difficult for Chinese scholars to prove the historical continuity of Chinese sovereignty over the Northeast. (Toa-Keizai, 1932: 16-38; Kawakami, 1933).⁵

Sensing perhaps that China's historical and even geographic stake over the former frontier regions of the Qing empire was weak, a group of Kuomintang-affiliated scholar-officials shifted their narrative strategies, focusing instead on the racial ties between the so-called "five races of the Republic" (*wuzu gonghe*). These racial nationalists, as I will refer to them, began arguing that China's principle claim over the Qing frontier and its people was based on the racial homology of the Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Hui and Tibetan peoples rather than the territorial or political continuity of the Chinese state. With increasing clarity throughout the 1930's, they stressed that all the Republic's citizens, including the Manchus and other "occupied peoples" of the former Qing empire, actually comprised an indivisible part of a single *Zhonghua minzu*, or Chinese race, what Sun Yat-sen had termed "the world's largest and most populous people who possess over four thousand years of civilized history" (Sun, 1924a: 188).

THE PROBLEM OF SUN YAT-SEN: ENTER THE YELLOW EMPEROR

However, Sun Yat-sen's ambiguous and often contradictory political doctrine actually hampered the racial nationalists in demonstrating that, according to Sun's own definition of *minzu*, all the peoples of China comprised a single *minzu* (Leibold, 2004). In his famous 1924 lectures on *minzuzhuyi*, Sun Yat-sen made an important distinction between *minzu* (race/nation) and *guojia* (state). States, he argued, were created from man-made forces while *minzus* developed out of natural forces, such as common blood, livelihood, language, religion, and customs. While Sun admitted that the Mongols had a different lifestyle than the Han people, and the Hui and Tibetans believed in a different religion than the Han, he still argued that only in China has a "single state developed out of a single *minzu*, while foreign countries have developed many states from one *minzu* or have included many *minzu* within a single state" (Sun, 1924a: 184-5). As a result, the Chinese comprised, what Sun termed, a single, homogenous *guozu* (race-state lineage). What about the Tibetans, Mongols, Manchus and other former Qing dynasty frontier peoples that Sun admitted did not share the same *minzu* characteristics as the Han majority? He dismissed them as numerically insignificant and evolutionary unfit, arguing that despite the less than ten million "non-natives" (*waila*), "we can say that the four hundred million Chinese people are entirely *Hanzu*: sharing a common blood, common language, common religion, and common customs - a single, pure *minzu*" (Sun, 1924a: 188). With regards to the frontier minorities it was only a matter of time before they "smelted together in the same oven" (*rongye wei yilu*) with the Han majority to fashioning a new corporate, yet equally, pure *Zhonghua minzu* (Sun, 1919: 187).

Japan's occupation of Manchuria and parts of Mongolia, and the continued Russian and British meddling along other parts of the Qing frontier made Chinese nationalists (of all political persuasion) more reluctant than Sun Yat-sen to dismiss

the minority peoples as numerically insignificant to the Chinese nation. Their numbers might be small but the land they occupied contained many of the important natural resources necessary for China's national development. Moreover, it was no longer sufficient to simply claim that all the peoples of the Qing dynasty were citizens of the Chinese Republic; rather scientific proof was now needed to counter Japan's claims about the ethnic diversity of China and the right of its oppressed frontier minorities to national self-determination. Sun Yat-sen's definition of *minzu* did not appear to work. Shao Yuanchong (1932a) and Dai Jitao (1931) tried, rather unconvincingly, to demonstrate that all Chinese people shared Sun's five-fold criteria for nationhood. Others, like Chen Guofu (1943), were completely forthright about the fact that the various *minzu* of China lacked a common livelihood, language, religion and customs. Officials within the Kuomintang found themselves in a quandary: they had elevated Sun Yat-sen's thought to the point of ideological dogma and claimed that China's salvation rested solely with his Three People's Principles; yet they were unable to use his own theory of national identity to prove that the polyglot frontier peoples of the former Qing dynasty comprised a single, homogeneous *Zhonghua minzu*.

The group of Kuomintang scholar-officials found a solution however in Sun's emphasis on the importance of blood kinship. In his 1924 lectures, Sun claimed that among the five forces involved in the formation of a *minzu*, common blood was the most important. "Since the blood of one's ancestors is always transmitted by heredity down through the *minzu*," Sun stated, "blood kinship (*xuetong*) is the greatest force" (Sun, 1924a: 187). Zhou Kuntian, a member of the Nationalist Government's Commission on Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs, argued that among Sun's five criteria only blood was "innate" (*xiantian*) while other criteria altered with changes in the

natural environment. Extrapolating further, Zhou contended that only a common bloodline was essential for the formation of a *minzu*. Differences in lifestyle, language, religion and economic way of life were temporary and would gradually disappear with increased communication and transportation (Zhou, 1941: 10). Dai Jitao and others used a similar rationale in claiming that the Han, Manchu, Mongol, Hui and Tibetan people belong to a single, ancient race. As Dai stated in a 1934 public letter his “Qinghai compatriots:

Today, the five big *minzu* and other *minzus* living within China were all *originally* a single race (*zhongzu*). It is only because they have lived in different places and migration at different times that they have dissimilar languages and religions. The reason why different regions have produced their own sages and religions during the last two to three thousand years has nothing to do with whether or not they belong to a single race (*renzhong*). It all makes sense when one thinks about it. Not only are all the *minzu* within our country a single family, our Qinghai compatriots are actually brothers from our ancestral home and relatives living within our ancestral land (Dai, 1934: 89 emphasis added).

For evidence of this ancient consanguinity, Dai Jitao and the other racial nationalists pointed to the *Shiji* (*Historical Records*) compiled by Han dynasty court historian Sima Qian in the second century BC. Unlike previous historical records, Sima Qian’s massive 525,000 character work attempted to record the entirety of China’s past by imposing moral order and linear continuity on its disparate literary canon. The *Shiji* begins with the *Huangdi* or Yellow Emperor and progresses through the “Five Emperors” (*Wudi*) and “Three Dynasties” (*Sandi*) - which Sima Qian refers to as the “Golden Age” of Chinese antiquity - to Qinshi Huangdi’s unification of all

sons and daughters of the Yellow Emperor into a single state. As Shao Yuanchong stated in a 1933 article, “there was almost no doubt that the Yellow Emperor was our *minzu’s* progenitor (*shizu*)” (Shao, 1933c: 369). Shao contended that the Yellow Emperor was not only “the first ancestor of the *Zhonghua minzu*,” but also the creative genius behind the creation of the Chinese state and culture. He was confident that if only the various peoples of China understood their direct racial and historical relationship with the Yellow Emperor, they would naturally unite into a single, indivisible body politic. “If we want to cultivate a national spirit and glorious national culture,” Shao wrote, “we must begin by fostering the glorious spirit of the Yellow Emperor; and to accomplish this, we must bear in mind, that we must start by eulogizing and exalting the Yellow Emperor” (Shao, 1933c: 369). Unlike the often convoluted and contradictory positioning of the frontier minorities in Sun Yat-sen’s principle of *minzuzhuyi*, notions of shared descent possessed deep cultural meaning and widespread appeal to the Chinese masses with their strong tradition of ancestor worship and kinship bonds (Dikötter, 1996: 592-94; Chow, 1997: 38-40)

Building on the writings of the late Qing anti-Manchuists, such as Zhang Binglin, Chen Tianhua, and others,⁶ the Republican era racial nationalists transformed the ancient saying about the Chinese being the “children of the Yellow Emperor” (*Huangdi zisun*) into a systematic theory of *Zhonghua minzu’s* antiquity and consanguinity. April 4th was declared a national holiday in honor of the Yellow Emperor’s birth, and Party officials (from both the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party) regularly gathered at Huangling in Sha’anxi province to pay their respects at what was thought to be the tomb of the Yellow Emperor (Shen, 1997). There was no fewer than 16 elegiac addresses between 1911 and 1949 declaring the Yellow Emperor the “progenitor of the *Zhonghua minzu*” (*Zhonghua minzu shizu*), the

“progenitor of the Chinese state” (*wo kaiguo shizu*) and the “progenitor of human civilization” (*renwen shizu*), with Sun Yat-sen, Chaing Kai-shek and Mao Zedong each offering their own homage to the Yellow Emperor (Liu Li, 1999). In its popular propaganda, the racial nationalists stressed the linear and unbroken genealogy of Zhonghua racial provenance, arguing that all the peoples of the former Qing empire could trace their ancestors back through the various Chinese dynasties to the inhabitants of the ancient Three Dynasties and then ultimately through the Five Emperors directly to a single, ancient progenitor—the Yellow Emperor.

GU JIEGANG AND THE DOUBTING OF ANTIQUITY

The attempt by the racial nationalists to manipulate Chinese history in the service of the Party’s contemporary political needs did not go unchallenged by May Fourth intellectuals. While the racial nationalists were using the Yellow Emperor to construct a myth of Zhonghua racial propinquity, a group of May Fourth iconoclasts were deconstructing China’s historical past. One individual in particular, Beijing University graduate Gu Jiegang, fiercely opposed the attempts of the Kuomintang state to create a myth of common ancestry.

As early 1923, Gu Jiegang began questioning the reliability of the ancient legends used in the construction of Sima Qian’s Golden Age chronology. Building on the historical skepticism of his mentor Hu Shi, Gu put forward a “stratification theory” (*jilei de cengci*) for explaining the limited and contingent knowledge contemporary historians have about China’s distant past. He argued that with the passage of time, historical myths become longer and more elaborate and mythical figures take on increasingly heroic and superhuman features. Because of this natural process of myth building, it is impossible for us to know the actual truth of ancient historical

events and people; rather historians were only capable of knowing the situation relating to the most recent written examples of these legends. For Gu Jiegang and other “doubters of antiquity” (*yigushi*), the essential question was not “What really happened in ancient China?” but rather “Why did past historians write what they did?” (Schneider, 1971: 188-217; Tay, 1987: 3-7; Hon, 1996: 323-26).

In a public letter published in the 1 July 1923 issue of *Dushu zazhi*, Gu outlined a provocative research agenda for ancient Chinese history. The goal of studying high antiquity should be the destruction of a set of commonly held misperceptions: 1) that the Chinese originated from a single *minzu*; 2) that the scope of Chinese territory has remained unified and unchanged throughout the ages; 3) that it is necessary to rationalize ancient myths and historical figures in the quest for a better life; and 4) that China possessed a Golden Age of antiquity. Gu Jiegang spent the next ten years gathering the necessary philological and historical evidence to challenge these historical myths (Gu Jiegang, 1923a: 99-102).

In 1926 Gu Jiegang began publishing his findings and those of his supporters and detractors in the multi-volume *Gushibian* (*Critiques of Ancient History*). In the first volume, Gu stunned China’s intellectual establishment by declaring that “properly speaking, there is no history (in China) before the Eastern Zhou dynasty,” claiming instead that all historical documents written prior to this period were of spurious origins (Gu Jiegang, 1921: 35). Gu contended that “Yu the Great,” the mythical founder of the first Xia Dynasty, was the oldest historical figure portrayed in the non-spurious records while all the other ancient rulers mentioned in Sima Qian’s Five Emperors chronology – the Yellow Emperor, Zhuan Xu, Ku, Yao and Shun - were mythical figures without any historical basis. Finally, in a move that clearly did not sit well with the racial nationalists, Gu Jiegang argued that all the stories about the

Yellow Emperor, the so-called “progenitor of the *Zhonghua minzu*,” were baseless historical legends manufactured sometime during the Qin dynasty (Gu Jiegang, 1923b: 59-60).

Gu Jiegang believed that the apologue of *Zhonghua* racial homogeneity was not only historically inaccurate but also detrimental to the state’s goal of fostering national unity among the Han majority and the frontier minorities. In the 1933 preface to the fourth volume of *Gushibian*, Gu referred to the factitious consanguinity of the Sage Kings as a prime example of the “idol of race” (*zhongzu de ouxiang*) (Gu Jiegang, 1933: 5-7). Gu argued that this idol of race was responsible for the erroneous belief in the existence of a racially pure “Huaxia” people in high antiquity. Historical documents reveal that the so-called Huaxia people and their neighboring tribes all possessed their own blood lineages. During the Zhou dynasty, for example, each of the various “*minzu*” worshipped their own ancestors. It was recorded in the *Book of Odes* that the Shang and Zhou *minzu* considered themselves descendants of two different progenitors. Gu claimed that the idol of race only arose following the forced political unification of the various Zhou kingdoms under the Qin and Han dynasties. Instead of using force to eliminate the strong sense of non-Huaxia “racial consciousness” (*zhongzu guannian*) among the barbarian kingdoms, like Chu and Yue, court officials suggested replacing the “horizontal system” of ancestors and spirits with a single “vertical system,” making the ancestor of “kingdom A” the father of the ancestor of “kingdom B,” and the founder of “kingdom C” the father of the ancestor of “kingdom A.” Consequently, Qin and Han officials began declaring: “We are all the sons of the Yellow Emperor; despite differences in sentiment and custom, we are now united into a single country and should eliminate regional prejudices” (Gu Jiegang, 1933: 6).

Gu Jiegang was also highly critical of the attempts by the Kuomintang regime to use the myth of racial consanguinity to buttress its political agenda for national unification. In a 1932 letter to fellow Yanjing University history professor, Hong Weilian, Gu referred to the State's nation-building project as the "manufacturing of ancient history" (*jiacao gushi*) and argued that a myth claiming all Chinese are the "children of the Yellow Emperor" was insufficient for fostering a "new conviction of national unity" (Cited in Gu Hong, 1998: 3). Gu's point here, as Larry Schneider has pointed out, was not that he disagreed with the Kuomintang's attempts to unify the Chinese people into a single national body or its efforts to improve relations between the Han majority and the frontier minorities - after all the very evolutionary survival of the Chinese people depended on their unity in the face of the West's superior material force – rather he disagreed with the State's methods for achieving this important goal of national unity (Schneider, 1971: 261). In Gu's mind, and those of many other May Fourth intellectuals, there was no conflict between nationalism and iconoclasm. He was convinced that the dissemination of lies about the historical relationship between the minority peoples and the Han majority would hinder rather than help the natural, evolutionary melding of sentiments and cultural practices:

Since we are all Chinese, we have many common interests. If we develop a good method of unifying the nation, we shall have no difficulty in staying together. The government does not need to lie, telling us that we have descended from the same ancestor. Even if the government is successful in unifying the country with lies, this unity will be flimsy. Once the people become intelligent, can this trick still deceive them? (Cited in Hon, 1996: 323).

Gu Jiegang believed that the actual story of frontier minorities' contribution to the nation's glorious past would foster the self-confidence and mutual understanding

necessary for the development of a truly unified body politic. Moreover, Gu believed that the minorities had a central role to play in the revival of the *Zhonghua minzu*, what May Fourth intellectuals claimed was an “old and decrepit” (*shuailao*) race on the verge of “extermination” (*miezhong*). Gu argued that the evolutionary youth and virility of the frontier minorities was needed to “infuse a bit of fresh blood” (*dedao yidian xin xueye*) into the veins of the Han majority (Gu Jiegang, 1926: 89).

Consequently, he frequently advocated intermarriage between the Han majority and the Tibetans, Mongols and other minority peoples as an effective method for solving the frontier question in China (Gu Jiegang, 1938: 21). Blood ties would help to strengthen national cohesion but needed to be rooted in the actual process of intermarriage rather than spurious myths about racial descent.

Gu Jiegang’s violent tearing down of the linear Golden Age chronology elicited a strong response from a number of politicians and academics in China. Some contended that the entire basis of Gu Jiegang’s conclusions rested on a scientifically flimsy and evidentially unsubstantiated “argument from silence” (*mozheng*). One cannot conclude that something never existed (i.e. China’s Golden Age) simply because there does not exist any evidence to prove it (Zhang Yinglin, 1925: 271-88). “It is a gross fallacy on the part of the historian,” Fu Sinian wrote of Gu Jiegang’s methodology in 1930, “to mistake what we do not know for what never existed (Cited in Wang Fan-sen, 2000: 118). Fu and others believed that it was all too easy during times of cultural insecurity to incorrectly conclude that because we do not know something, it never actually existed. An element of faith was required to restore national self-confidence in China.

Kuomintang officials were far less restrained in their criticism of Gu Jiegang’s “idol smashing.” Racial nationalists within the Party worried about the ill effects of the

Gushibian movement on the state's nation building project. They feared that Gu's questioning of the Golden Age narrative could undermine the apologue of racial and cultural homogeneity central to their attempts to construct a single, unified *Zhonghua minzu*. While there was little they could do to curtail the environment of academic freedom in the private institutions in and around Beijing, government officials did attempt to ensure that Gu's "doubting of antiquity" did not spill over into the public realm where it could influence the naïve masses. In 1929, at the insistence of Dai Jitao, the Central Government banned the high school textbook Gu Jiegang had written for the Shanghai Commercial Press (Gu Chao, 1996: 172; Hon, 1996: 321-3). Dai disapproved of the way Gu's *Elementary National History (Benguoshi jiaokeshu)* questioned the orthodox chronology of the "Three Dynasties and Five Rulers" (*Sandai Wudi*) and called into question the authenticity of the entire Golden Age narrative. In justifying his decision to ban the book, Dai Jitao is reported to have said:

While we should allow academic debate, these various theories should not be permitted in our textbooks; otherwise, the self-confidence of the nation will be shaken, which is, of course, harmful for the state. China's ability to unify itself into a single entity depends completely on the people's belief that they come from a single progenitor (Cited in Gu Chao, 1994: 172).

Dai was apparently so outraged by the fact that the Commercial Press had already published 250,000 copies of Gu's textbook that he insisted the government fine the company one million *yuan* and immediately remove all copies of the book from distribution (Gu Chao, 1994: 172).

In challenging Gu's historical skepticism, many of his critics looked to the new "hard sciences" of geology, archaeology and paleontology.⁷ They claimed that Gu had intentionally overlooked or slighted prehistoric evidence coming from recently

excavated artifacts, preferring to deconstruct rather than reconstruct ancient Chinese history. With its establishment in 1928, the Archaeology Section of the Kuomintang's central research institute, Academia Sinica, became a source of tremendous hope for those wished to salvage and reconstruct Chinese antiquity. The new director of the Archaeology Section, the Harvard-trained anthropologist Li Ji, shared many of the same concerns about the ill effects of Gu's antiquity doubting on national morale. With archaeology it was possible, he argued, to conduct scientifically valid, yet nationally sensitive, research on ancient Chinese history. Li contended that not all ancient myths were a "tent of lies," and stressed the importance of recently unearthed artifacts and oracle bones in rebuilding a more positive image of Chinese history (Li Ji, 1934: 191-2). The Western scientific method of field research opened the door for the discovery of material remains that would provided, in the words of Li Ji's most famous student K.C. Chang, the "scientifically-authenticated empirical data" necessary to revive traditional Chinese historiography (Chang, 1981:161-66). Li Ji's colleague at Academia Sinica, Fu Sinian, the new director of its Institute of History and Philology, suggested that archaeological research could help challenge the so-called "Western Origin of Chinese Civilization" (*Xilaishuo*), an influential theory put forward by French Sinologist Terrien de Lacouperie and others that the ancestors of the Chinese people actually migrated into the Yellow River Valley from the Mesopotamia region of West Asia. Archaeological research, he claimed, had the potential to demonstrate the existence of a native Chinese culture equal in age to those of Babylon and Egypt and promote a sense of cultural pride among the Chinese people (Fu, 1934: 352).

In his review of *Gushibian*, historian Lu Maode criticized Gu's failure to draw on the new science of archaeology. He rejected Hu Shi's claim that due to the

untrustworthiness of the ancient Classics we can only say that Chinese history began 2000 to 3000 years ago. According to Lu, this statement overlooked the ability of archaeologists to provide scientific evidence about pre-historic man. Archaeological research in Egypt, for example, had uncovered numerous details about its pre-historic civilization, while also enabling scholars, in the words of English Egyptologists A.H. Keane, “to push Egyptian culture back further and further, so that it now reaches back over 8000 years” (Lu, 1926: 371). By failing to take into consideration recent archaeological discoveries in Asia, Lu questioned whether Gu Jiegang and his fellow *Gushibian* scholars were really employing a “scientific historiographic method.” If Yu the Great and other mythical figures in ancient Chinese history were “pre-historic figures,” as Gu Jiegang claimed, what was the point of using the *Shang Hymns*, the *Analects*, the *Shuowen* dictionary and other “historical documents” to either prove their existence or challenge their validity? “Shouldn’t all these questions be handed over to the archaeologists,” Lu queried, “who can use the results of their excavations to draw final conclusions (about China’s pre-history)?” (Lu, 1926: 375). In his argument that the various *minzu* of ancient China “all possessed their own origins and progenitors,” Gu Jiegang was overlooking recent archaeological evidence in support of the monogenesis of mankind. In fact, Lu asserted, China’s ancient people all descended from a “single race” (*yizhong*) and then evolved into “different groups” (*gelei*) under different environmental conditions. The various creation stories discussed by Gu Jiegang were simply invented by these different tribes and then passed down orally from generation to generation. It was these myths, Lu claimed, and not the Golden Age mythology, that was spurious in nature. Without the benefit of archaeological evidence, Lu Maode concluded, nearly all of Gu Jiegang’s findings in *Gushibian* must be considered “unscientific” (*feikexue*)

and open to questioning (Lu, 1926: 373 & 380). One day, Lu and others like him believed, archaeologists would prove Gu Jiegang and his fellow doubting historians wrong and demonstrate the fundamental unity of the Chinese people.

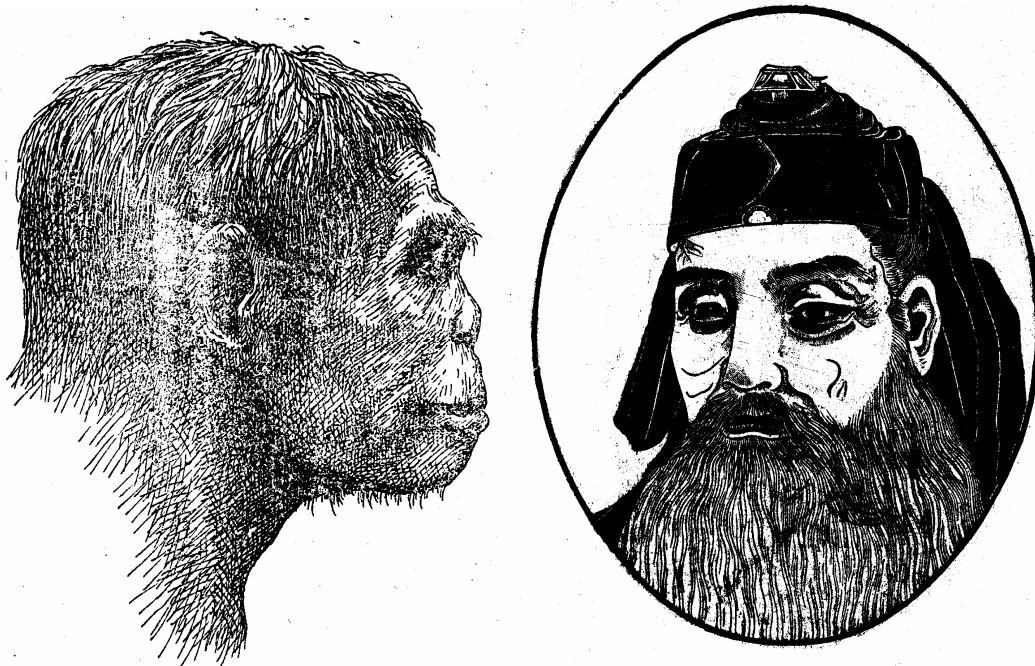
THE PROBLEM OF GU JIEGANG: ENTER PEKING MAN

The wait was not long. On 2 December 1929 Chinese archaeologist Pei Wenzhong discovered a nearly intact fossilized cranium belonging to what appeared to have been a 500,000 year old hominid while digging in an underground cave west of Beijing. Over the next seven years, archaeologists unearthed other hominid remains at Zhoukoudian, enabling scientists to gradually reconstruct the early life and origins of prehistoric “Chinese” man (Jia and Huang, 1990; Chen Xingcan, 1997: 76-263). Pei’s discovery created quite a buzz among the scientific community in Beijing, with over 150 people packing the small auditorium of the Chinese Geological Survey on the afternoon of 28 December 1929 to hear about the discovery and its significance (Anonymous, 1930b: 1046-49). Throughout the 1920’s Western archaeologists digging at Zhoukoudian discovered a series of fossilized teeth which they claimed represented a new “hominid genus” – *Sinanthropus pekinensis* or “Peking Man.” After a thorough examination of the newly discovered skullcap, the head of the new Cenozoic Research Lab in Beijing Dr Davidson Black concluded that, due to its unique combination of highly original and purely modern features, *Sinanthropus* appeared to be an older and more generalized type of hominid than either *Pithecanthropus* (Java Man) or *Homo neanderthalensis* (Neanderthal Man), the two oldest hominid remains discovered to date. Black also argued that the *Sinanthropus* skull appeared closely related to the original type of hominid that led

not only to the evolution of Java Man and Neanderthal Man but to all *homo sapiens* (Andersson, 1973 [1934]: 94-126). Yet, the scientific community remained divided on the significance of Peking Man, with most claiming that Java Man, Peking Man and Neanderthal Man represented three different, yet now extinct, offshoots from the main line of evolution between apes and humans (Bowler, 1986: 31-40).

Most Chinese scientists also approached Black's conclusions with a degree of skepticism. Writing in 1930, eminent Chinese scientist and director of the Chinese Geological Survey, Weng Wenhao seemed uncomfortable with the idea that this "ape-man" (*yuanren*) might prove to be the actual progenitor of the Chinese people, let alone all *homo sapiens*. The early drawings and anatomical reconstructions of Peking Man by Black and others, depicted a hairy savage which sharply contrasted with the traditional images of the Yellow Emperor as sagacious, cultivated and resplendent (see Illustration 1).

Illustration 1: Republican era Images of Peking Man and the Yellow Emperor



Source: *Huangdi Hun* [Spirit of the Yellow Emperor] (1903) & *Zhoukoudian Dongxue Cengcaijue Ji* [Record of the Stratified Excavation of the Zhoukoudian Cave] (1937)

While Weng was clearly proud of the fact that Peking Man provided scientific evidence for the existence of primitive man in Asian, if not the actual Chinese source of mankind, he was also quick to point out:

We should not misunderstand that Peking Man is the direct ancestor of the Chinese race (*renzhong*); actually, the difference between *Sinanthropus* and modern man is far greater than the variation among different races today. Thus, there is only a slight relationship between *Sinanthropus* and the Chinese race or any other race. Based on reconstructions (of Peking Man), the most we can say (although we are currently lacking evidence of this) is that Peking Man and contemporary races seem to share a common ancestor (which has yet to be discovered); however, *Sinanthropus* and our genuine ancestors (who still have not been found) evolved separately: with

Sinanthropus evolving to the point when it became extinct while our race gradually advanced until it reached its current form (Weng, 1930: 270).

With regards to the relationship of *Sinanthropus* and the *Zhonghua minzu*, Weng Wenhao was only willing to state that “at most we can call Peking Man a very, very distant younger cousin sharing the same father and certainly not our direct lineal ancestor” (Weng, 1930: 270). In other words, Peking Man represented a branch off the main line of human evolution and thus could not possibly be the progenitor of the modern Chinese race.

The idea that the sagacious *Zhonghua minzu* somehow evolved from a primitive group of “ape-men” seemed shocking to most Chinese during the 1930s and 40s. A 1939 article in *Science Life (Kexue shenghuo)* put it rather bluntly when it asked its readers: “Are humans’ ancestors monkeys?” The author proceeded to argue that “sensitive people” feel uncomfortable with this notion and instead insisted that the Chinese people descended from a group of ape-humans, rather than monkeys, who have long since become extinct (Cited in Schmalzer, 2004: 111-12). The excessive hair, dark skin, large nose and other primate-like features associated with Peking Man had long been signifiers of the non-Chinese barbarians and not “the children of the Yellow Emperor” (Dikötter, 1992: 138-42).

Western scientists working in China, on the other hand, were more willing to highlight the morphological relationship between Peking Man, modern man and the Chinese race. Following the untimely death of Black in 1934, Franz Weidenreich, a Jewish émigré from Germany, was named the new director of the Cenozoic Research Lab. The discovery of new, more fully developed human remains in 1935 led Weidenreich to conclude that “*Sinanthropus* is the ancestor of recent man,” or at the very least, “nothing (in the evidence) contradicts the assumption that

Sinanthropus is a direct ancestor of recent man” (Weidenreich, 1935: 467). The fact that Peking Man was both older and had a larger cranial capacity than Java Man and Neanderthal Man seemed to suggest that he was Darwin’s “missing link” between primitive ape and modern man. Weidenreich also claimed to have discovered two unique features—a thickening of the jaw and shovel-shaped incisors—which when compared with modern northern Chinese revealed a similar racial morphology. “*Sinanthropus* and the Mongoloid of today,” Weidenreich wrote in 1936, “must have a direct relationship which can only be the case when *Sinanthropus* is a direct ancestor of that race and, therefore, also of mankind of today” (Weidenreich, 1936: 38).

Yet, some Chinese scholars did find the discovery of Peking Man and Weidenreich’s scientific analysis useful in demonstrating the native provenance and shared racial descent of the *Zhonghua minzu*. In his 1939 *History of the Chinese Race (Zhongguo Minzushi)*, Academia Sinica anthropologist Lin Huixiang (1939) argued that the discovery of Peking Man provided scientific evidence of the autochthonous provenance of the Chinese people. Lin and others publicly challenged the “Western Origin” thesis, contending that evidence of early man in China invalidated the claims of Lacouperie and other Western cultural imperialists. In his 1943 *Historical Outline of the Zhonghua minzu’s Development (Zhonghua Minzu Fazhan Shigang)*, historian Zhang Xuguang (1942) went a step further in arguing that the unearthing of Peking Man provided “sufficient evidence to prove that, first, the *Zhonghua minzu* was the original inhabitant of Chinese territory and, second, that today’s *Zhonghua minzu* can be traced back through ancient history to a single progenitor” (Zhang Xuguang, 1942: 4). Zhang contended that today the cultural differences among the various “lineage branches” (*zhizu*) of Peking Man were the result of diverse environment conditions rather than “race” (*zhongzu*).

This theory of Chinese consanguinity and native origin was transformed into official Party policy and ideological dogma with the publication of the Kuomintang's new political manifesto *China's Destiny* (*Zhonghua mingyuan*). Ghost written by Party historian Tao Xisheng and first published in Chiang Kai-shek's name in 1943, *China's Destiny* became required reading for all students, soldiers and Party members and sold over one million copies by 1947. In its first chapter, "The Growth and Development of the *Zhonghua minzu*," Tao Xisheng contended that the Han and its lineage branches were both racially and cultural pure. Tao argued that all the various Chinese "lineages" (*zongzu*) "were either descendants of a common ancestor or interrelated through marriage," or in other words, "the main and branch lineages all belong to the same bloodline" (Chiang, 1986 [rev ed. 1944]: 2). In the revised version, which was published in January 1944, this racial argument was strengthened with the insertion of the statement that "throughout its lengthen historical development, [the *Zhonghua minzu's*] lineages, on the occasion of the contact and blending of their cultures, often discovered their common origin... In short, our various lineages not only belong to the same *minzu* but also the same race (*zhongzu*)" (Chiang, 1986 [rev ed. 1944]: 2).

The chapter's official primer, written by Yu Jianhua in 1944, listed the discovery of Peking Man as "the best evidence" of the native genesis of the *Zhonghua minzu* but again seemed reluctant to draw a direct link between Peking man and the Chinese race. Instead, Yu continued to insist that "the Yellow Emperor is our progenitor," pointing to the *Shiji* and other historical sources as evidence for his insistence that "the history of the *Zhonghua minzu* could also be said to be one of the world's largest genealogies (*zupu*)" (Yu, 1944: 9). Sigrid Schmalzer has recently demonstrated that there was a general reluctance among publishers of early 20th

century school textbooks to include the discovery of Peking Man in the story of Chinese origins. Only two of the fourteen textbooks she surveyed mentioned the discovery of Peking Man. This reflects, she argues, both the ongoing debate within the scientific community about the significance of Peking Man and a degree of cultural resistance to the idea that this “ape-man” was the ancestor of the Chinese people (Schmalzer, 2004: 106-13).

This did not prevent some Chinese intellectuals from using the Peking Man discoveries to shore up their claims about the racial unity of the Chinese people. Xiong Shili, a classically trained scholar who was one of the leading voices in the Kuomintang’s attempts to promote traditional Chinese morality and culture, made Peking Man the star attraction in his 1939 lectures on Chinese history at the Kuomintang Central Military Academy in Chongqing. He began his talk on the origin of the Chinese people by admitting that they formed through the non-violent melding of the Han, Manchu, Mongol, Hui and Tibetan peoples. Yet, he was quick to stress that they represented five racially interrelated *zongzu* (“lineages”) with a common progenitor rather than five distinct *minzu* as most Chinese intellectuals and politicians argued following the 1911 Revolution. Irrespective of the current debate over the monogenesis versus polygenesis of mankind, Xiong claimed that, when it came to the so-called “five lineages” (*wuzu*) of the *Zhonghua minzu*, “logic determines that they all share a common bloodline” (Xiong, 1933: 33). The source of Xiong’s “logic” and confidence was the recent discovery of their common ancestor—Peking Man.

For Xiong the discovery of Peking Man provided irrefutable evidence that the Chinese people originated from a single progenitor who lived in the Yellow River valley some 500,000 to one million years ago and then spread out in all four directions, populating China and possibly the rest of the world. “If among the five

lineages there were a few *minzu* who migrated into China from other regions and did not disseminate outward from mighty China,” Xiong asked his students, “then where are the ancestors of these other people?” (Xiong, 1933: 33). In other words, until archaeologists discover evidence of an older fossil man outside the Yellow River Valley and China, it is safe, and more importantly scientific, to conclude that all China’s people originated from Peking Man.

Xiong Shili argued in his lectures that any differences among the five lineages were temporary and insignificant. “If the five lineages share a common bloodline,” Xiong asked his students the question they were inevitably wondering, “then why do their customs (*xi*) and dispositions (*xing*) so obviously differ?” (Xiong, 1933: 33). Like Sun Yat-sen and others, Xiong turned to the analogy of the family in explaining these differences:

Mother and father gave birth to many sons and daughters—some wise, others foolish; some strong, others weak. Is it possible for them all to be equal without any difference? Everyone knows that every person’s natural endowment (*tianxing*) differs and different communities are influenced by their natural environment. Yet, today thanks to advances in science and the development of modern technology, man can now control his environment and make his people equal (Xiong, 1933: 33).

Prior to this great process of equalization, however, Xiong left little doubt in the minds of his students that the Han majority was the wisest, strongest and most fecund of the Zhonghua lineages. He referred to the *Hanzu* as the “grandchildren of the three sage kings and five virtuous emperors” and argued that they have not only spread throughout China but also Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Burma, Thailand, the Ryukyu Islands, the Spratley Islands and even the Americas via the Bearing strait. Because

of their long and glorious culture, “one often refers to the *Hanzu* when they are speaking about the *Zhonghua minzu*” or what others call the *Huazu* or “Chinese race-lineage” (Xiong, 1933: 2).

The bulk of Xiong Shili’s lecture was spent demonstrating that the four main minority lineages (the Manchus, Mongols, Hui and Tibetans) were actually “branches” (*fenzhi*) of the Han majority. Xiong used a series of carefully selected quotes from the Chinese historical cannon to construct an intricate ethnogenealogy linking ancient barbarian ethnonyms with the original clans of the Yellow Emperor and the contemporary Manchu, Mongol Hui and Tibetan peoples. Here, Xiong’s methodology differed little from that of other Chinese historians. There exists a long tradition in China of fictive ethnogenealogies. Since Sima Qian first pioneered the method in his *Shiji*, generations of Chinese historians have constructed historical genealogies aimed at incorporating the recalcitrant frontier barbarians into the heavenly cosmology (*tianxi*). Xiong Shili, however, went a step further in adding a new layer of modern, “scientific” proof of this racial unity:

From the distribution of our *Huazu*, we can infer that our prehistoric ancestor was Peking Man (this is based on the similar racial morphology of Beijing people and *Sinanthropus*). Among the descendants of Peking Man, one branch remained in the Divine Land (*shenzhou*) and became today’s Han lineage (*Hanzu*); another branch moved north-eastward where they propagated rapidly and are today know as the Manchu lineage (*Manzu*) or the ancient Eastern Hu barbarians; another branch propagated and moved to the extreme north in the region of what is today called Inner and Outer Mongolia and are today the so-called Mongols who originally comprised of the Xiongnu and other peoples; another branch propagated in the direction of the

Northwest provinces of Gansu and Xinjiang and then into Central Asian and other regions and are today known as the Hui lineage (*Huizu*) or what was originally called the Di people; and another branch propagated in Tibet, Qinghai and other locations and are today known as Tibetan lineage (*zangzu*) or the ancient western Qiang people. It is from the discovery of Peking Man by archaeologists that we now know our five lineages originally come from a single source. Simply put, the five lineages share a common blood lineage with Peking Man. This evidence is solid and cannot be disputed (Xiong, 1933: 18-19).

While much of Xiong Shili's historical evidence was flimsy and based on texts, like the *Shiji*, that Gu Jiegang claimed were spurious, his archaeological evidence carried with it a new aura of scientific credibility.

In their important volume examining the link between archaeology and politics, Philip Kohl and Clare Fawcett argue that a close relationship exists between archaeology, nationalism and the construction of national identities. They point to a shared history between the development of archaeology as a scientific discipline in the 19th century and the formation of nation-states in Europe and America. Archaeological evidence has long played, they contend, an important role in the construction and naturalization of national and racial identities; and, moreover, the inherent ambiguity of archaeological and prehistoric data "paradoxically strengthens this role or, more accurately, enhances the potential for abusing it" (Kohl and Fawcett, 1996: 13). For Xiong Shili the discovery of Peking Man seemed to provide the type of irrefutable scientific evidence necessary to not only silenced Gu Jiegang and the other doubters of antiquity but also prove the antiquity and racial unity of the Chinese people. Xiong Shili concluded his lectures by claiming he was convinced of

the monolithic (*yiyuande*) and monophyletic (*tonggende*) origin of the *Zhonghua minzu*. “The discovery of Peking Man by archaeologists has made it even more certain that this primitive race was the common ancestor of all our five lineages, who only later split into different branches and are today know as the so-called five lineages” (Xiong, 1939: 34-35).

RE-THINKING MINZU: TOWARDS A SUBJECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

While Xiong Shili and others within the Kuomintang were using archaeological evidence to reconstruct the myth of *Zhonghua minzu* consanguinity, Gu Jiegang was encouraging a group of foreign-trained academics to reexamine the entire concept of *minzu*. Drawing on the new disciplines of anthropology, sociology and ethnology, these academics developed a new language and theory of national identity, one capable of conceptualizing the unity of the Chinese people without ignoring the reality of their diverse historical, linguistic and cultural traditions. In particular, they looked to challenge the scientific validity of race as an analytical category. (Tay, 1987: 13-17; Liu, 1986: 221-48; Gu Chao, 1993: 214-77).

The constricting nature of Sun Yat-sen’s narrow definition of *minzu* became one of the central concerns of these scholars. As discussed earlier, during his 1924 lectures on *minzuzhuyi*, Sun Yat-sen set forth a rigidly formalistic definition of *minzu* as a group of people who shared a set of five common traits—blood, religion, language, economy, culture, customs—of which blood was identified as the most important. Sun, however, left an ambiguous legacy on the position of the ethnic minorities within the Chinese nation-state. On the one hand, he begrudgingly accepted, according to his own criterion, the multi-*minzu* basis of the Chinese

Republic, recognizing the Han, Manchu, Mongol, Tibet and Hui as distinct peoples or *minzus*. On the other hand, however, he also argued that “since the Qin and Han dynasties China had been developing a single state (*guojia*) out of a single *minzu*,” creating what he called a completely homogeneous *guozu* (state race-lineage) (Sun, 1924a: 184-96). In spite of this contradiction, Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang elevated Sun’s discourse of *minzuzhuyi* to the level of intellectual dogma following his death in 1925. Racial nationalists in the Party latched onto Sun Yat-sen’s claims about blood, arguing that the entire *Zhonghua minzu* shared an objective and innate unity in its common bloodline. By offering a more subjective, and they believed more scientific, definition of *minzu*, these cultural nationalists, as I will refer to them, hoped to promote Chinese political unity without neglecting the importance of ethnic and cultural pluralism within both China’s past and present.

During the inaugural seminar of the Frontier Study Society established by Gu Jiegang in 1936, the young ethnologist Fei Xiaotong spoke about his field research among the Yao people of Guangxi. In contrast to Sun Yat-sen’s rigid definition of *minzu*, Fei suggested the concept of an “ethnic unit” (*zutuan*), first developed by his Russian mentor S.M. Shirokogoroff, as a more useful tool for analyzing ethnic diversity in China. Fei told his audience that, according to Shirokogoroff’s theory, all communities that shared a common culture, language, consciousness and endogamous kinship comprised a distinct ethnic unit. Fei stressed, however, that the subjective and situational nature of ethnic identity meant Shirokogoroff’s concept needed to be applied flexibly depending on specific, local conditions. Ethnic identity was not based on a static set of objective criteria, as Sun Yat-sen’s theory of *minzuzhuyi* would have us believe, but rather a constantly evolving network of relationships. During his research in Guangxi, Fei discovered a growing sense of

common identity among the geographically isolated and cultural distinct Yao communities of Guangxi. He also argued that rather than fostering a sense of common *Zhonghua minzu* identity, the state's civilizing mission had actually banded the different Yao communities together fostering, rather than undermining, a distinct *Yaozu* ethnic identity (Fei, 1936: 131-44).

Lü Simian, a member of Gu Jiegang's Yugong Study Society, began his trailblazing 1934 history of Chinese *minzus* by highlighting the difference between "ethnicity" (*minzu*) and "race" (*zhongzu*), claiming that the former refers to differences of language, religious beliefs and customs while the latter refers to differences in skin colour and physiology. Claiming that "the ethnic groups of a state should be neither too heterogenous nor homogenous," because they would be too difficult to rule if they were completely heterogeneous and too difficult to develop if they were completely homogenous, Lü argued that China (*Zhonghua*) was unique in its "integrated ethnic heterogeneity" (*heji cuoza zhi zu*). He identified twelve distinct *minzus* that comprise the Chinese people, which he referred to as the Huaxia, and argued that the Han were at its cultural and racial core. Like Sun Yat-sen, it was the demographic weight and cultural effulgence of the Han majority that have drawn these different ethnic groups together throughout the long course of Chinese history (Lü, 1987 [1934]: 6-7).

Several years later another member of the Yugong Study Society, Qi Sihe offered an even more systematic critique of Sun Yat-sen's definition of *minzu*. In an essay written in honor of the twelfth anniversary of Sun's death and published in the April 1937 issue of *Yugong*, Qi stressed the importance of distinguishing between the concepts of "race" (*zhongzu*) and "nation" (*minzu*). Since the late Qing dynasty, an entire generation of scholars, like Liang Qichao, Zhang Binglin and Sun Yat-sen, had been using the Chinese terms *zhongzu* and *minzu* interchangeably without

distinguishing between their distinct English conjugates of “race” and “nation.” Qi acknowledged the important shift within Sun Yat-sen’s thinking from the “narrow racism” (*zhainai de zhongzuzhuyi*) associated with pre-revolutionary anti-Manchuism towards the call for the assimilation of the “five races” (*wuzu*) of the Republic into a single *Zhonghua minzu*. While this aspect of Sun’s theory reveals “enormous foresight,” Qi warned his readers, “it is not necessary for us to conceal his shortcomings” (Qi, 1937: 27).

A graduate of Harvard University, Qi Sihe believed that the major flaw in Sun’s theory of *minzuzhuyi* occurred in his overly formalistic definition of *minzu* and its insistence that “common blood” was the dominant force in the creation of a *minzu*. “Viewed from today’s perspective,” Qi wrote, “the biggest shortcoming of Sun Yat-sen’s *minzuzhuyi* is his obsolete view of *minzu* and his failure to distinguish between *minzu* (nation) and *zhongzu* (race)” (Qi, 1937: 28). Qi claimed that Sun’s understanding of *minzu* was based on the outdated ideas of an older group of Western political scientists and anthropologists (like Burgess and Gobineau) who stressed the importance of consanguinity in group formation. The new generation of American scholars, lead by Charles Hayes and Franz Boaz, has demonstrated that human characteristics once thought to be inherited, are actually the result of differences in environment rather than blood. Qi contended that due to years of racial mixing and interbreeding it was impossible to use race as a scientific methods for distinguishing between one group of people and another. In other words, since “pure races” (*chunci zhongzu*) no longer existed, the entire concept of race was a meaningless and unscientific category of analysis. “From the perspective of anthropology,” Qi argued, “race (*zhongzu*) was originally grounded in superstition and thus cannot be scientifically analyzed” (Qi, 1937: 28). From the perspective of

biology, race has to do with the “innate” (*xiantian*) characteristics of skin color, physical make-up and bone structure while the characteristics of language, religion, and customs are “acquired” (*houtian*) and relate to changes in environment and culture. The idea that there somehow exists “pure races” is a myth, which cannot be established scientifically due to the several hundreds of thousands of years of racial melding. Despite the fact that all humans descended from the same pair of primates, environmental differences have produced innumerable differences in culture and habits.

In place of Sun’s objective and racial definition of identity formation, Qi echoed Fei Xiaotong in calling for a more dynamic and situational understanding of *minzu*. He argued that membership in a *minzu*, or “nation,” was based on a subjective sense of unity and difference and not a laundry list of objective criteria. A *minzu*, Qi argued, was based on consciousness rather than substance, making it a mental rather than physical phenomenon; similarly, political rather biological factors determine the acquired characteristics that fashion *minzu* identity rather than a set of innate and unchanging physical attributes. For China, Qi Sihe located this common élan in its shared history of past calamities and achievements and current struggle against foreign imperialism. In short, the nation, as defined by Qi Sihe and others, was a group of people who possessed a sense of common history and shared destiny. The formation of what Sun Yat-sen had called a “country with a single *minzuzhuyi*” could only proceed on the basis of a common feeling of national belonging rather than unscientific theories of biological descent (Qi, 1937: 30-34).

The tension between these two narrative strategies of Chinese national unity continued well into the 1940s. The outbreak of full-scale war with Japan in 1937 did, however, place additional pressures on Chinese academics to modify or self-censor

any discussion ethnic diversity in China. The publication of Chiang Kai-shek's *China's Destiny* elevated the Kuomintang's discourse of common racial descent to a new level of political orthodoxy in Nationalist China, and any discussion of a distinct Manchurian *minzu* or Mongolian culture virtually disappeared from academic discourse among the exiled educational institutions of the Southwest. Under intense patriotic pressure, Gu Jiegang and others came forward to publicly declare that "the *Zhonghua minzu* is one" (Gu Jiegang, 1939). Recognizing the need for a temporary postponement of the enlightenment project for the sake of China's survival, many scholars forsook their academic freedom for positions with the Kuomintang government, and began actively promoting its frontier policy. That said, however, they continued to find creative and subtle ways to challenge the myth of *Zhonghua minzu* antiquity and consanguinity while maintaining their assertion that China's cultural and racial diversity was the true source of its national unity (Leibold, 2003: 459-509).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

For Chinese of nearly every political persuasion, the Japanese invasion of China highlighted the urgent need for the incorporation of the former Qing frontier regions and its peoples into the new Chinese nation-state. The urgency of this nation-building project increased with the active manipulation of the national aspirations of the frontier minorities by the Japanese and other imperialist powers. Facing "the loss of the state and extermination of the race" (*wangguo miezhong*), Han intellectuals devised competing strategies of national incorporation. Convinced that Sun Yat-sen was right when he described the people of China as "a sheet of loose sand," Kuomintang scholars and politicians marshaled scientific evidence to

prove the fundamental unity of the *Zhonghua minzu* in the face of obvious differences among its citizens. Edward Said has highlighted the role of science - as institutionalized in the disciplines of history, archaeology, ethnology and linguistics - in fashioning “ontogenetic explanation” of racial origins (Said, 1979: 231-33). By presenting “empirically analyzable data” these discourses reinforce and naturalize speculative myths of historical belonging, assisting with the difficult process of “stretching the short, tight, skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire” (Anderson, 1991: 86).

The actual temporal source of this national unity was the point of departure for two of the more popular narratives of national belonging in Republican China. On the one side, a group of racial nationalists closely affiliated with the Kuomintang situated Chinese homogeneity in the distant past, arguing that all Chinese people (including the frontier minorities of the Qing empire) shared a common ancestry and thus comprised a single, pure race. Unwilling and unable to wait for nature to run its evolutionary course, they manufactured a myth of shared descent, suggesting that the Yellow Emperor or Peking Man was the ancient progenitor of the entire *Zhonghua minzu*. In the tradition of Zhang Binglin and other turn of the century Anti-Manchuists, they constructed a racial genealogy demonstrating the historical continuity of the Chinese people and their unbroken line of descent from a single ancient ancestor. Arguing that the threat of foreign imperialism required immediate action, they propelled Sun Yat-sen’s future state of Chinese racial unity backwards in time to the very origin of Chinese history. On the other side, a group of cultural nationalists resisted this distortion of history and chose to locate the unity of the Chinese people in a subjective and unfolding national consciousness which, they claimed, accompanied the natural evolutionary process of racial and cultural melding.

They rejected the attempts by the racial nationalists to erase all traces of ethnic and cultural diversity in China, contending that only the truth of the *Zhonghua minzu's* shared history and common plight was sufficient to encourage the continued development of national sentiment. Here, in the tradition of Liang Qichao, “Chineseness” was rooted in the organic concrescence of a composite national people rather than the unsullied persistence of a pure race and cultural tradition. Prasenjit Duara has pointed to the deep ambivalence within nationalist discourse over the historicity of the nation. “While on the one hand nationalist leaders and the 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” (Duara 1996: 42). Despite this temporal ambiguity, these two contested narratives sit firmly within the framework of the linear history of the nation-state, projecting the “geo-body” of the Chinese Republic onto a more fluid past in the construction a single national subject – the *Zhonghua minzu*.

Today, both of these narratives of national belonging continue to operate in the People’s Republic of China. PRC historians, in a fashion similar to Xiong Shili’s 1939 lecture, continue to construct elaborate webs of historical and racial interrelations aimed at binding the current inhabitants of the People’s Republic together (Leibold, 2003: 514-90). Like the racial nationalists, they trace the source of this unity to the very origin of Chinese civilization, claiming that the advanced culture, production forces and population of the Han majority allowed it to “absorb” (*xishou*) and “assimilate” (*tonghua*) the frontier minorities as far back as the Zhou dynasty (if not earlier) and led to the formation of a unified, multiethnic *Zhonghua minzu* as early as the Qin dynasty (Fan, 1950: 45-7). In their academic literature, PRC scholars echo

Gu Jiegang in rejecting the monophyletic thesis of Chinese origin as unscientific and chauvinistic, claiming that the *Zhonghua minzu* has “multiple origins” (*duoyuan*). Looking past Marx’s theory of historical materialism and Stalin’s rigid definition of “nationality” (*minzu*), they stress that the unity of the Chinese nation is rooted in over five thousand years of racial and cultural melding. “Despite China’s vast territory and some inevitable conflict between feudal *minzus*, the process of racial intermixing is an irrefutable historical pattern on which the coagulability (*ningjuli*) on the *Zhonghua minzu* has been built” (Chen Yuning, 1994: 5). Here the unity of the Chinese people is more than a subjective consciousness (viz Qi Sihe), a product of rising capitalism (viz Stalin), or a common evolutionary trajectory (viz Sun Yat-sen), but rather part and parcel of the very fabric of each Chinese family’s history and racial makeup. In locating the source of this unity in China’s glorious past, the Party-state has built on Republican era narratives on the Yellow Emperor and Peking Man in its popular propaganda, repeatedly referring to them both as the progenitor of today’s racial homogenous *Zhonghua minzu* (Sautman, 1997: 76; Sautman, 2001; Liu Li, 1999; Schmalzer, 2004: 498-574). Despite its slightly different vocabulary, the goal of the PRC discourse on national unity (*minzu tuanjie*) remains the same: the construction of a myth of national belonging rooted in the perception of a common history, soil and blood.

NOTES

¹ The term *Zhonghua minzu* is a modern linguistic construct. It entered the Chinese lexicon around the first decade of the 20th century with the combination of the common Tang Dynasty term for China, *Zhonghua* (literally “central florescence” and today used to refer to “the Chinese”) and the foreign neologism *minzu* to create *Zhonghua minzu* or the “nation/race of central florescence” (Chen Liankai 1988: 62-

66). To the best of my knowledge, the term appears to have been coined by Liang Qichao with its earliest usage occurring in 1903 (Liang 1903: 75). The term *Zhonghua minzu* was widely used by Liang and other late Qing reformers to refer to their multi-ethnic conceptualization of China – what Liang termed “greater nationalism” (*da minzuzhuyi*) – in opposition to the the “narrow nationalism” (*xia'ai minzuzhuyi*) of the anti-Manchu Han nationalists. The term *minzu* was adapted from the Japanese term *minzoku* (which itself was a neologism for the German word *volk*) around the early 1880's. It did not however come into widespread use among Chinese intellectuals until the first decade of the 1900s. In early twentieth century China, and one could argue today as well, *minzu* was used to express a cluster of meanings and associations similar to those expressed by the English terms race, nation, people, ethnic group and nationality. Some Chinese authors went to great lengths to define the term, listing any number of objective criteria necessary for *minzu* formation. Many others, however, employed it in a very loose and often contradictory fashion, frequently, for example, using it interchangeably with the terms *zhongzu* (race) and *renmin* (people). Although most users of the term undoubtedly believed that *minzu* expressed a specific objective reality, the ambiguous nature of the term added to its polemical value. Partha Chatterjee has pointed out that “‘politics’ necessarily operates in an ideological world in which words rarely have unambiguous meanings; where notions are inexact, and have political value precisely because they are inexact and hence capable of suggesting a range of possible interpretations” (Chatterjee 1986: vii). I would contend that the fluid nature of the terms *minzu* and *Zhonghua minzu* requires that we avoid an *a priori* definition and instead interpret their meaning based on the specific context of their usage.

² Prasenjit Duara (1997) has argued that *Xiyaxiya*'s apparently contradictory mandate for solving the frontier question and liberating the Oriental *minzu* is an example of the "two-part strategy of 'domesticating' transnationality," which provided an alternative strategy for incorporating the transcultural frontier minorities into the territorial confines of the nation-state. The journal's original focus is a clear example of the tension between the clearly defined geo-body of the nation and redemptive, transnational ideology of Pan-Asianism; yet the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 made these narratives of "nationalized transnationals" increasingly untenable as a strategy for fostering national sentiment among the frontier minorities which were increasingly falling under the political orb of the Japanese imperialists.

³ Mark Elliott (2000) has recently demonstrated that "Manchuria" constituted a distinct geographic and ethnic entity as early as the 1700s, with the toponym "Manchuria" deriving from the interaction between European and Japanese cartographers around the late 1700s and the Japanese usage of the Chinese characters *Manshū* to refer to what was called "Chinese Tartary" on early European maps. This geo-body provided a strong basis for Japanese claims about the existence of an independent Manchukuo state in the 1930s and further problematized Chinese claims over the territorial boundaries of the former Qing empire.

⁴ Li Ji's abridged summary of Fu Sinian's report was published in English in 1932 as *Manchuria in History: A Summary*. The original Chinese language draft, entitled *Dongbei shigang: gudai zhi Dongbei* (*A draft history of the Northeast: the ancient Northeast*), was never published. See Wang Fan-sen, 2000: 149-50; Shao Dan, 2002: 42).

⁵ While China's claim for historic sovereignty over Manchuria was weak at best, the massive influx of Chinese settlers during the late Qing and early Republic brought a distinctly Chinese face to the territory. By 1942, Manchuria was home to nearly 8 million Han Chinese completely overwhelming the ethnic Manchurians and Mongols. The reality of Manchuria's demographic and increasingly cultural integration into China led the Lytton Commission to conclude that the territory was "unalterable Chinese." Despite the fact that it condemned the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Manchukuo state, the final report attempted to walk a middle ground between the nationalists' claims of the Japanese and Chinese state. As a result, the report and the League of Nation's verdict failed to completely satisfy both sides, despite the fact that the Kuomintang government officially endorsed its findings (Duara, 2003: 43-53).

⁶ In their attempts at constructing a racially distinct "*Hanzu*" (Han race), the anti-Manchu revolutionaries were the first to use the Yellow Emperor in fashioning a narrative of common descent. The major difference between the uses of the Yellow Emperor by the late Qing revolutionaries and Republican era racial nationalists was the scope of this myth of common origin. For the Qing revolutionaries, the Manchus were purposefully excluded from the nation while post-1911 intellectuals stretched the boundaries of the nation to explicitly include the Manchus and other frontier minorities of the former Qing dynasty. (Shen 1997; Chow 1997; Liu Li 1999; Leibold 2003: 381-94). As Frank Dikötter (1996) has pointed out this discourse of race in Republican China should not be misconstrued as a "derivative discourse" of a more "authentic" discourse in the West but rather "the active reconfiguration of indigenous modes of representation," such as ancestor worship and lineages groups that were central to the construction of social identity in premodern China. It is also interesting

to note that reformers within the late Qing dynasty also employed the myth of racial descent to rationalize their construction of China as a unitary yet multi-ethnic nation. Gang Zhao (2005) cites a 1907 memorial from Dong Fangsan (a licentiate from Fulu county in Hubei) which stated: “The Manchu, Mongols and Han are different branches of a single tree. Originally, they came from the same ancestor and they will develop into a unity (*yi er shu, shu er yi*).”

⁷ During the 1920s and 1930s, the distinction between these disciplines was blurred in China – particularly in the case of archaeology and paleontology with the term *kaoguxue* was for both. What they shared in common, however, was their use of the new Western, scientific method of field excavation and surveying.

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