

MAKING THE MAJORITY:  
DEFINING HAN IDENTITY IN CHINESE ETHNOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

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According to the People's Republic of China, fifty-six ethnic groups combine to form the Chinese nation although the Han, at over ninety percent of the population, constitute China's overwhelming majority. Their numbers now exceed one *billion*, the largest ethnic group on earth and twenty percent of the world's population. My dissertation project, entitled "Making the Majority: Defining Han Identity in Chinese Ethnology and Archaeology," challenges the putative authenticity of this official category by critically examining its creation and evolution in the modern period. In the early twentieth century anthropology became instrumental in defining the Chinese as a people and composing China's national narrative, or what Benedict Anderson calls the "biography of the nation." While archaeologists searched for Chinese racial and cultural origins in the Yellow River valley of the Central Plain, ethnologists studied non-Han minorities in the rugged and remote frontiers. These scholars linked contemporary minorities to ethnonyms from classical texts, thus imposing on them a legacy of barbarism while Han assumed the role of ethnic Chinese, heirs of historic Chinese civilization, and the heart of the modern Chinese nation. Over the course of the past century social changes and political expediency necessitated revisions of the Han narrative, and popular conceptions evolved accordingly. Today the various Chinese political communities of Taiwan, Hong

Kong, Macao, and the PRC all perceive the Han differently, reflecting their divergent visions of the Chinese nation. On the whole, examining interpretations and representations of Han identity across heuristic and spatial boundaries shows that the concept of Han is in fact fluid, evolving, and ultimately political. This study concludes that Han, like “white” or Caucasian in the US, represents an imagined majority—a social construct that continues to inform the negotiation of Chinese identities.

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## PREFACE

It seems that in challenging Han identity I have taken on the role of the foolish old man from Chinese folklore who, armed only with a shovel, dedicated himself to the Sisyphean task of removing the mountain. Certainly this present work offers little more than a miniscule effort—a metaphorical shovelful—but hopefully one that in conjunction with the efforts of others will accomplish something great. In any case, it is not an individual effort, either for the old man, who succeeded with the help of his progeny, or for me.

I am profoundly indebted to a number of individuals and institutions for their assistance with this study. At the University of Pittsburgh I have enjoyed the very good fortune of working with a committee that has both encouraged independent work and creativity while providing inspiration and much needed guidance for the project. My thanks especially to Evelyn Rawski for conceding to take me on as a doctoral student, and to Nicole Constable, Tony Barbieri-Low and Dick Smethurst for investing themselves in a naïve graduate student's overly ambitious project. I am certain that the diversity of interests and backgrounds among committee members greatly enriched the study. Even so, the final product is my own, including the inevitable errors.

I have also been fortunate to work with Hsu Cho-yun, professor emeritus of the University of Pittsburgh and senior fellow of the Academia Sinica in Taiwan, who proved to be an important connection with the past. Other senior scholars at the Academia Sinica, including Li Yih-yuan and Wang Fan-sen, as well as staff at the Institute of History and Philology and the Archaeology Section, provided access to relevant archives and other

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In Beijing, a number of individuals at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, including He Xingliang and Du Rongkun of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology and Chen Xingcan of the Institute of Archaeology, shared their insights and experiences, as did Wang Qingren and Wang Jianmin of the Central University for Nationalities. Additionally I am grateful to Li Guangmo and Zou Heng for their exceptional hospitality and willingness to reminisce. In Guangzhou I appreciated working briefly with the Anthropology Department faculty of Zhongshan University, and particularly Liu Wensuo with whom I have been able to continue collaboration. My thanks also to the Xiamen University Anthropological Research Institute and the Smithsonian Institution archives each for hosting me on short visits.

I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge the many generous sources of research funding, beginning with the University of Pittsburgh Department of History, the University Center for International Studies, and the China Council. The project was also supported by Title VI funding from the Department of Education, the Fulbright program, the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the National Security Education Program, the American Historical Association, and the American Council of Learned Societies. Discrete portions of the dissertation were presented at conferences hosted by Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, and Concordia Universities as well as at annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association and the American Historical Association, all of which aided me in vastly improving the manuscript.



Li Yi-tze, currently a doctoral candidate in the Anthropology Department at Pitt, exercised great patience in explicating handwritten archive documents on abstruse academic topics and I hope my attempts at reciprocation did him some service. Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to Ian and Anya, without whom I would have finished in half the time. I have no regrets.

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## INTRODUCTION: HAN AS CHINA'S WHITE

According to the People's Republic of China, fifty-six ethnic groups unite to form the prodigious Chinese nation. Within this diverse mix, however, the Han constitute an overwhelming majority, with 91.96 percent of the population. The number of Han now exceeds one *billion*, or twenty percent of the world population, making Han the largest ethnic group not only in China but on the face of the earth.<sup>1</sup>

A diminutive Western analogue is found in the category White or Caucasian. According to the latest figures from the United States Census Bureau, exactly 211,460,626 people fall within the racial category "White," making this the official US majority at 75.1 percent of the overall national population.<sup>2</sup> Both Han and White share the dubious distinction of being the majority within their respective sphere, but ironically they also share an obscurity wholly incongruous with their numbers. While racial and ethnic studies have tended to focus narrowly on minorities, only recently has the monolithic, undefined majority become a viable subject for critical analysis.

### **Critical Race Theory and Critical White Studies**

Precise demographic statistics like those cited above imply that race and ethnicity are objective and quantifiable, yet social critics have recently drawn attention to what

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<sup>1</sup> *White Papers of the Chinese Government* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2000), 450.

<sup>2</sup> This census was taken in 2000, the same year as the PRC census. See US Census Bureau statistics online at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-1.pdf>.

Benedict Anderson called “the fiction of the census.”<sup>3</sup> Michel Foucault has reminded us that our classificatory schemes are neither timeless nor natural; they are, in fact, *created*.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu both discussed how such “practical taxonomies,” in imposing order on the world, offer a means of exercising power.<sup>5</sup> By tracing the histories of these established taxonomies, we may discover how and when categories were first created and, most importantly, *why*—what purpose they served and for whom.

Ironically, while history was once invoked to construct racial typologies, it has now become the key to deconstructing race. As early as 1964, the historian Dante Puzzo suggested that because race is a modern concept, historical rather than social analysis offers the surest means of discrediting race and, by extension, racism.<sup>6</sup> In the 1970s, in the wake of the American Civil Rights movement, what came to be called Critical Race Theory grew out of the convergence of Critical Legal Studies and radical feminism to pose a concerted challenge to racial thinking. The historical method became imperative as CRT scholars worked to prove that “race and races are products of social thought and relations. Not objective, inherent, or fixed, they correspond to no biological or genetic reality; rather, races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), 166.

<sup>4</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of power exercised through taxonomy see Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 159-97.

<sup>6</sup> Most notably, Dante Puzzo encouraged historical rather than merely social analysis of race. In offering a brief historical overview of the development of racism, he argued that race, unlike ethnocentrism, is a modern concept. See Dante A. Puzzo, “Racism and the Western Tradition,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 25.4 (1964): 579-586.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 7. For an overview of Critical Race Theory see the introduction to this work as well as Kimberlé Crenshaw, ed., *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement* (New York: New Press, 1995).

Dru Gladney pointed out that majorities are no exception; they too “are made, not born.”<sup>8</sup> In a movement that gained notoriety in the 1990s, Critical White Studies, once hailed as the “cutting edge” of Critical Race Theory, spearheaded an exploration of the origins, historical construction, and evolution of the category White or Caucasian.<sup>9</sup> Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado and, more recently, John P. Jackson Jr., have explored the legal construction of White through US court decisions.<sup>10</sup> Like its CRT parent, however, Critical White Studies rapidly diffused from legal studies into other fields such as anthropology, sociology,<sup>11</sup> and particularly American history. In an early study, Reginald Horsman traced the intellectual history of the Anglo-Saxon and Aryan nation myths from their origins in Europe to America, where they evolved into a belief in the manifest destiny of a chosen people.<sup>12</sup> Later Theodore W. Allen compiled a multi-volume study on *The Invention of the White Race*, and more recently scholars have employed the historical method to demonstrate the opacity and plasticity of White: Noel Ignatiev chronicled how Irish immigrants, once considered a lower race on a par with Negroes, became White Americans;<sup>13</sup> Karen Brodtkin showed us how Jews merged with postwar White America.<sup>14</sup> In *Working Toward Whiteness*, David Roediger included Italians, Slavs, and

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<sup>8</sup> Dru C. Gladney, *Making Majorities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 1.

<sup>9</sup> An interdisciplinary reader that includes many of the representative writings from this period can be found in Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, eds., *Critical White Studies: Looking Behind the Mirror* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> Derrick Bell, *Race, Racism, and American Law* 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Aspen Publishers, 2004). John P. Jackson, *Science for Segregation: Race, Law, and the Case against Brown v. Board of Education* (New York: New York University Press, 2005). See also Ian F. Haney López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> For whiteness studies in sociology, see Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Ruth Frankenberg, ed., *Displacing Whiteness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

<sup>12</sup> Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxons* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

<sup>13</sup> Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>14</sup> Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

Poles in the transformation of Eastern and Southern European immigrants into American Whites.<sup>15</sup> Others have even begun to critically examine Whites in the European context and beyond.<sup>16</sup> The historical dimension clearly demonstrates that as social and political circumstances changed, so too did the criteria for inclusion and exclusion—thus the borders of racial or ethnic categories are not fixed but continually shifting.

Critical Race Theory made its mark across academe, including China studies. In his pioneering work on *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, the historian Frank Dikötter echoed basic CRT tenets in positing that race, whether in the US or China, “is a cultural construct with no relationship to objective reality.”<sup>17</sup> Pamela Crossley, in her study of the Manchus, also referred to race as a “construct” and agreed on “the fundamental unviability of the notion that ‘race’ is or ever can be a thing real in itself.”<sup>18</sup> Crossley even suggested that ethnicity is just a euphemism for race, thereby suggesting that the critique of race may also apply to ethnic categories.<sup>19</sup> Crossley, Wang Mingke, Ralph Litzinger, and others have demonstrated that ethnic identity in China is indeed both negotiable and evolving. Crossley’s influential studies of the Qing dynasty describe the pluralistic origins of the Manchu people and the modern creation of Manchu ethnic

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<sup>15</sup> David Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White* (New York: Basic Books, 2005). See also *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Verso, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> Alastair Bonnett, *White Identities: Historical and International Perspectives* (Harlow: Prentice Hall, 2000). Radhika Mohanram, *Imperial White: Race, Diaspora, and the British Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

<sup>17</sup> Dikötter, Frank. *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), viii.

<sup>18</sup> Pamela Crossley, *Orphan Warriors: Three Manchu Generations and the End of the Qing World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 5.

<sup>19</sup> Pamela Kyle Crossley, "Thinking about Ethnicity in Early Modern China," *Late Imperial China* 11.2 (June 1990): 1-36.

consciousness.<sup>20</sup> In his study of the Yao nationality, Litzinger discovered that the ethnic taxonomy created by the communist state and imposed on minority peoples essentially reconfigured affiliations and divisions in China's southwest, even grouping together a culturally and linguistically heterogeneous mix of peoples under the single rubric of Yao. Applying this broadly suggests that ethnicity in China is indeed a modern construct, and the project undertaken by anthropologists and the state to define China's ethnic groups created new categories of identification that have since been accepted as objective, historical fact.<sup>21</sup> In studying the boundary between the Qiang and Han nationalities, Wang found that both geographical and cultural divisions between these two groups shifted over time, and that in fact no hard or well-defined borders ever existed.<sup>22</sup> All of these studies seem to support the theory that ethnicity, even in the context of China, is socially constructed and historically evolving.

But studies elucidating the synthetic nature of ethnicity, whether generated in China or abroad, has tended to focus on China's fifty-five "minority nationalities"<sup>23</sup> at the exclusion of the majority; critical examinations of the Han remain scarce. Only recently has a movement emerged in China which examines the Han as an ethnic group, a trend that began with the "First National Academic Conference on Han Ethnic Group

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<sup>20</sup> Pamela Crossley, *Orphan Warriors* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). See also Pamela Kyle Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>21</sup> Ralph Litzinger, *Other Chinas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> Ming-ke Wang, "From the Qiang Barbarians to the Qiang Nationality: The Making of a New Chinese Boundary" in Shu-min Huang and Cheng-kuang Hsu, *Imagining China: Regional Division and National Unity* (Taipei: Academia Sinica Institute of Ethnology, 1999). Earlier iterations of this study appear in Wang Mingke, "Hanzu bianyuan de Qiangzu jiyi yu Qiangzu benzhi" in Huang Yinggui and Ye Chunrong, eds. *Cong zhoubian kan Hanren de shehui yu wenhua* (Taipei: Academia Sinica Institute of Ethnology, 1997); Wang Mingke, *Huaxia bianyuan: lishi ji yi yu zuqun rentong* (Taipei: Yun chen wen hua shi ye gu fen you xian gong si, 1997).

<sup>23</sup> 少数民族

Research” in 1987 and the subsequent publication of *Han Research*.<sup>24</sup> Such famous social scientists as Fei Xiaotong and Li Yih-yuan also turned their attention to the majority, but minority studies still far eclipse study of the Han.<sup>25</sup> Even so, an important distinction exists between White Studies and extant Han Studies—while the former dedicates itself to challenging the very foundations of race and Whiteness, the latter actually reifies the idea of Han ethnicity, drawing from both history and anthropology to substantiate the category. In this manner Han Studies, as presently constituted, is neither critical nor reflexive.<sup>26</sup>

In the 1990s, however, as Critical White Studies swept through the American academy, pioneering critiques of Han began to appear. Dru Gladney, an anthropologist specializing in China’s Muslim community, found that Han, like White, remains “undefined.” He further noted that the “widespread definition and representation of the ‘minority’ as exotic, colorful, and ‘primitive’ homogenizes the undefined majority as united, monoethnic, and modern.”<sup>27</sup> In 2001 Kai-wing Chow, a professor at the University of Illinois, contributed a chapter to an edited volume wherein he explicated the relationship between the modern creation of a Han race and the Chinese nation.<sup>28</sup>

Although some studies followed, no broad movement akin to Critical White Studies has yet developed among scholars of China.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Han min zu yan jiu* (Nanning: Guangxi Chubanshe, 1989).

<sup>25</sup> Today a Han Nationality Society 汉民族学会 exists within the Chinese Society of Ethnological Studies 中国民族学学会.

<sup>26</sup> This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, but arguably the most representative work is Xu Jieshun, *Han minzu de renleixue fenxi* (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1999).

<sup>27</sup> Dru Gladney, “Representing Nationality in China,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 53, no. 1 (1994): 93.

<sup>28</sup> Kai-wing Chow, “Narrating Nation, Race, and National Culture: Imagining Hanzu Identity in Modern China” in Kai-wing Chow, Kevin M. Doak, and Poshek Fu, eds., *Constructing Nationhood in Modern East Asia* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

<sup>29</sup> See for instance Dru Gladney, ed. *Making Majorities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). Here Gladney situates Han within a context of global majorities.

Observing this lacuna Susan Blum, in a review of Western scholarship on China's minorities in 2002, remarked on the continued obsession with minority studies and called instead for "a full-fledged investigation into the making of the majority category 'Han,'" and "the intellectual lineages of such study."<sup>30</sup> Prompted in part by Blum's challenge, this dissertation project began in the same year. Unlike the continuing vogue for minority studies, and in contrast to the few Chinese-language studies on the Han that simply expound old narratives, this study aims to problematize the very idea of Han ethnicity.<sup>31</sup> Inspired by Critical White Studies and the few critiques of Han that have come before, I argue that the Han are *not* a homogenous community that transcends time as is often assumed, a trope that serves only to reify nationalist mythology and ethnic conflict. Rather, through historical analysis, this study seeks to establish how definitions of Han have changed over the past century while postulating *why* these changes occurred.

### **Children of the Yellow Emperor: Sun Yat-sen and the Revolutionaries, 1898-1923**

It is important to recognize that familiar modern identities, including that of the Han, grew out of a hybridization of both indigenous, premodern roots and modern, Western science. China's revered literary canon provided a foundation for the former: classical histories dichotomized a civilized core and a barbarian periphery with a dynasty reigning from the center, a cosmology that modern revolutionaries recast into a binary of

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<sup>30</sup> Susan D. Blum, "Margins and Centers: A Decade of Publishing on China's Ethnic Minorities," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 61:4 (2002): 1289. Guy R. Kent also reviewed recent studies of the Manchus in "Who Were the Manchus? A Review Essay," *Journal of Asian Studies* 61, no. 1 (2002): 151-64.

<sup>31</sup> This study is thus not a search for the "real" or "historical" Han; rather, this is a historiographical survey of such narratives. Therefore I refrain from analyzing the factual historicity of the narratives presented (for which I am unqualified in any case) and focus more on the *evolution* of these narratives.



Han and minority. But the process of hardening cultural markers into official racial categories occurred only gradually and underwent many permutations. We know that during the Yuan dynasty [circa 1300] Kublai Khan had divided the imperial population into four classes according to political privilege: Mengren (Mongols), Semuren (“those with colored eyes”), Hanren (northern Chinese), and Nanren (southerners), the latter indicating that a great portion of today’s Han would not, in the Yuan dynasty, have been considered Hanren.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, Crossley has pointed out that the Yuan dynastic records designated those peripheral peoples with a “settled lifestyle,” including elements of the Kitan, Bohai, and Jurchen tribes, as Han.<sup>33</sup> Although an official rubric of Han existed in the Yuan, which marks a step toward the modern taxonomy, it clearly lacked rigid or well-defined criteria for inclusion and exclusion and so remained eminently permeable.

In *Orphan Warriors*, Crossley examined the racialization process in Qing China. Early in the dynasty categories were soft and opaque. Beginning in 1601 the Eight Banners system classed the Qing bannermen into Manchu, Mongol, and Hanjun units, but she conscientiously pointed out that the latter included “people of often indeterminable Chinese, Jurchen, or Korean descent” with little regard for ancestry.<sup>34</sup> Even then it was not unusual for those belonging to one banner, for instance the Hanjun, to be transferred to another banner like that of the Manchu, in which case “they were thereafter considered to be Manchu in every respect.”<sup>35</sup> During the course of the dynasty “old differences among various federations, tribes and clans were worn away beneath the ‘Manchu,’

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<sup>32</sup> Morris Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 71.

<sup>33</sup> Pamela Crossley, “The Tong in Two Worlds: Cultural Identities in Liaodong and Nurgan during the 13<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries,” *Ch’ing-shih wen-t’i* 4.9 (1983): 21-42.

<sup>34</sup> Crossley, *Orphan Warriors*, 5.

<sup>35</sup> Crossley, “The Tong in Two Worlds,” 22.

‘Mongol,’ and ‘Chinese-martial [Hanjun]’ categories created by the court. Such labels, once based primarily upon cultural identity, were adjusted in the eighteenth century to accommodate the court’s new emphasis upon genealogy and its formalization of Manchu culture.”<sup>36</sup> Ironically, then, the measures taken by the Qing court to set themselves and the banners apart from their subjects as a ruling elite were successful enough that by the end of the dynasty, Han and Manchu had developed as distinct and antagonistic races.

The real catalyst for the transformation from clan to race, or from Hanren to Hanzu, came with the introduction of Western ideas of Social Darwinism and the Enlightenment drive to “categorize, classify, and measure” the natural world, including its human population.<sup>37</sup> In 1775 the German medical professor Johann Friedrich Blumenbach divided humankind into five distinct races—Caucasian, Mongolian, African, American, and Malay. Anthropology, which began as a branch of medicine that studied human anatomy, soon dedicated itself to collecting human head and body measurements to substantiate these racial typologies under the guise of “science.”<sup>38</sup> When this racial discourse permeated Chinese society in the late nineteenth century it transformed extant lineages into racial pedigrees, converting the Qing taxonomy into a system of races complete with Western-derived ideas of biological determinism—that is, that physical attributes are an outward manifestation of mental or moral character.<sup>39</sup> Chinese

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<sup>36</sup> Crossley, *Orphan Warriors*, 228.

<sup>37</sup> See Kai-wing Chow, “Narrating Nation, Race, and Culture,” 53-56.

<sup>38</sup> For a brief overview of this history see John P. Jackson Jr. and Nadine M. Weidman, *Race, Racism, and Science* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2004), pp. 1-59.

<sup>39</sup> Although Dikötter demonstrates that stereotypes and prejudices existed in premodern China, here I follow those scholars who argue that racial thinking is a derivative of Western science and therefore a modern phenomenon. On the modern development of racial thought see Dante A. Puzzo, “Racism and the Western Tradition,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 25 (1964): 579-586; George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); George W. Stocking Jr., *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). For

revolutionaries picked up on this new discourse to challenge Qing legitimacy: In order to distinguish themselves from Manchus and others of barbarian extraction, revolutionaries chose the Yellow Emperor as progenitor of the Han and symbol of the Chinese race.<sup>40</sup>

The Han therefore became “Descendents of the Yellow Emperor” who had emerged from *zhongyuan*,<sup>41</sup> the “central plain” of the Yellow River valley and origin of Chinese civilization. Association with *zhongyuan* not only allowed the Han to assume royal lineage to an ancient homeland, but also enabled appropriation of Confucian culture, a tradition now effectively divorced from barbarians like the Manchus.<sup>42</sup>

Whereas culturalism could make the Qing Chinese, racism depicted Manchus as foreign usurpers and barbarians who had merely taken on the trappings of Chinese culture. Race was thus permanent and immutable—nothing could make Manchus into Han. This enabled revolutionaries like Sun Yat-sen to turn anti-Qing political sentiments into anti-Manchu racism, rallying Han to bring an end to an alien dynasty and its attendant “Manchu oppression.”<sup>43</sup> But after dissolution of the Qing state in the early twentieth century, Han identity remained the core of the Chinese national imaginary.<sup>44</sup>

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evidence in the Chinese case see and Poo Mu-chou, *Enemies of Civilization* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005); Peter Zarrow, “Liang Qichao and the Conceptualization of ‘Race’ in Late Qing China,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Modern History* 52 (2006): 113-163.

<sup>40</sup> Shen Songqiao, “The Myth of the Yellow Emperor and the Construction of Chinese Nationhood in the Late Qing,” *Taiwan shehui yanjiu jikan* 28 (1997): 1-77. See also Kai-wing Chow, “Imagining Boundaries of Blood” in Frank Dikotter, ed. *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997).

<sup>41</sup> 中原

<sup>42</sup> Kai-wing Chow, “Narrating Nation, Race, and Culture.” Chow discusses at length the relationship between evolutionary theory and revolutionary ideals.

<sup>43</sup> de Bary, 321.

<sup>44</sup> For further discussion of the relationship between race, revolution and nation in China, see Peter Zarrow, “Liang Qichao and the Conceptualization of ‘Race’ in Late Qing China,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica* 51 (2006): 113-163.

## Uniting the Five Races: 五族共和<sup>45</sup>

In 1911 the newly inaugurated Republic, now free from Manchu overlords, looked outward to face the threat posed by foreign imperialism. Amidst fears of extinction in a world of social-Darwinist competition for national survival, Sun Yat-sen, leader of the revolution and father of the newly established Republic, lamented the vulnerability of the Chinese people, whom he likened to an inchoate mass of “loose sand.”<sup>46</sup> He warned:

If we do not earnestly espouse nationalism and weld together our four hundred million people into a strong nation, there is danger of China’s being lost and our people being destroyed. If we wish to avert this catastrophe, we must espouse nationalism and bring this national spirit to the salvation of the country.<sup>47</sup>

According to Sun, the key to national unity and salvation would be the Han. In his words, “If in the past our people have survived despite the fall of the state [to foreign conquerors], and not only survived themselves but been able to assimilate these foreign conquerors, it is because of the high level of our traditional morality.”<sup>48</sup> This traditional morality of the Han is capable of “arousing a sense of national solidarity and uniting all our people.”<sup>49</sup> Just as racialization of Han had mobilized the Chinese against the Qing, so nationalization of Han would assist in galvanizing the Chinese people against foreign

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<sup>45</sup> Here I translate *zu* as race rather than ethnicity, in part to remain consistent with the following quote but also to emphasize the focus on lineage and biology as primary traits of a *zu* at the turn of the century. The transition from *zu* as racial construct to ethnic construct occurred only gradually and the two ideas were often conflated.

<sup>46</sup> 一盤散沙

<sup>47</sup> William Theodore de Bary, *Sources of Chinese Tradition* vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 321.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

imperialism. In his “Three Principles of the People,” Sun asserted that the Chinese are of one blood and share biological descent:

For the most part the four hundred million people of China can be spoken of as completely Han Chinese. With common customs and habits, we are completely of one race....Compared to other peoples of the world we have the greatest population and our civilization is four thousand years old.<sup>50</sup>

But the equation of Han with the Chinese nation, while serving revolutionary ends, now posed a dilemma. Clearly although Sun recognized the existence of non-Han groups within China, his ideal nation would consist of Han united by blood and culture.

Therefore what of the other *zu*, or lineage groups, created under the Qing dynasty, including the Manchus—what is their place in the new Chinese nation? This quandary elicited two different responses. On the one hand, Sun suggested that the answer was nothing short of forced assimilation: “We must facilitate the dying out of all names of individual peoples inhabiting China, i.e., Manchus, Tibetans, etc....we must satisfy the demands of all races and unite them in a single cultural and political whole.”<sup>51</sup> While this seems to have been Sun’s agenda, in the mean time the persistence of non-Han groups and the exigencies of territorial integrity led Sun to begrudgingly advocate *wuzu gonghe*,<sup>52</sup> or uniting the five *zu* into one nation, hence the provisional flag of the Republic made up of five equal stripes to represent the Han, Man, Meng, Hui, and Zang (respectively the Han, Manchus, Mongols, Uigurs, and Tibetans). China would still be a single people, the *zhonghua minzu*, under a single state, *zhonghua minguo*, able to fend

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 321.

<sup>51</sup> June Dreyer, *China’s Forty Millions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 16.

<sup>52</sup> 五族共和

off foreign imperialism.<sup>53</sup> But identities established in the Qing proved surprisingly resilient, as demonstrated in the attempt to realign ethnocentric allegiances to the new cosmopolitan state. Revolutionaries thus bequeathed a paradoxical legacy to China's anthropologists—a divisive taxonomy and the ideal of national unity.

### **Anthropology and Han Identity**

Scholars of nationalism have demonstrated how states mobilize history to produce a linear, teleological narrative that Benedict Anderson calls the “biography of the nation.”<sup>54</sup> Shared participation in this narrative then provides a sense of identity and community. In the twentieth century, anthropology became key to defining the Chinese and composing this story: while archaeologists focused on China's heartland to seek out the roots of the Chinese people and civilization, ethnologists traveled to the wild and remote borders to study non-Han minorities. Elites imposed a legacy of barbarism on contemporary minorities, linking them to ethnonyms from ancient histories while Han assumed the role of ethnic Chinese, heirs of historic Chinese civilization, and the heart of the modern Chinese nation. Thus the anthropological dyad of ethnology and archaeology essentially provided the text for China's national narrative.

But Prasenjit Duara and others have urged us to question, rather than reify, these national narratives by looking to its disjunctures or counternarratives.<sup>55</sup> In that spirit, this

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<sup>53</sup> James Leibold has pointed out that Sun was never fond of the concept of five united races and only begrudgingly accepted it as an expedient for maintaining national unity. See “Positioning ‘minzu’ within Sun Yat-sen's Discourse of Minzuzhuyi,” *Journal of Asian History*, 38.1-2: 163-213.

<sup>54</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), 204-6.

<sup>55</sup> Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). See also “Bifurcating Linear History: Nation and Histories in China and India,” *Positions* 1.3 (1993): 779-804.

study emphasizes discontinuity and change, or “revisions,” in the Han narrative over the course of the past century. Throughout the study I intend to show how these revisions, often initiated by anthropologists, evolve with social changes and political expediency to produce an official narrative promulgated by the state and popularly accepted.

The study begins with Li Chi, China’s first doctor of anthropology, whose pioneering dissertation combined the methods of social science and history to investigate *The Formation of the Chinese People*. Proceeding from the traditional binary of a civilized “We group” versus a barbarian other, Li, like Sun and the revolutionaries, defined the former as descendents of the Yellow Emperor who had emerged from the Central Plain. Although he acknowledged that pure races no longer exist in China, he clearly believed that they once had and so endeavored to trace, through analyses of culture and biology, the dissemination of originary Han traits over time and space. Later, as his career path led him to pioneer archaeology in China, Li extended his search for Han origins by conducting China’s first excavations in the Yellow River valley of the Central Plain, the fabled homeland of the Yellow Emperor and cradle of Chinese civilization. Beginning in 1928 Li directed the famous excavation of the Shang dynasty capital at Anyang, where he unearthed the earliest evidence of Chinese writing, thus linking known prehistoric cultures to the historical records of imperial dynasties that span millennia—a linear series culminating with the modern Republic. This discovery not only legitimized Chiang Kai-shek’s government as the new incarnation of the Chinese polity but also satisfied the search for a respectable, modern, and scientifically-derived national identity with roots deep in antiquity.

While chapter one covers the advent of Chinese archaeology and its focus on the center, chapter two turns to the periphery. In the 1920s, while Li Chi searched for the origins of the Han in the Central Plain, ethnology developed as a complementary counter-discipline that scientifically and systematically studied China's non-Han other. While the celebrated scholar and statesman Cai Yuanpei introduced and then institutionalized the discipline of ethnology in China, the field really flourished in the 1930s as World War II threatened the nation with disintegration. To combat this, China's leading field ethnologist, Ling Chunsheng, along with other likeminded scholars, increasingly pursued studies that would emphasize the historical unity of the peoples and territories of China. While the doctrine of *wuzu gonghe* had earlier laid the groundwork for galvanizing a united Chinese nation, during the war of resistance unprecedented narratives of shared origins and historical interactions among Han and minorities permeated the Republic's education system and Chiang Kai-shek's own official biography of the nation as found in *China's Destiny*.

Chapter three examines the gradual post-war demise of Han as a racial construct defined by lineage and biology, a prevalent idea among earlier revolutionaries. The process is seen clearly in the career of Li Chi who, as a pioneer of physical anthropology in China, had attempted to define the Han biologically beginning with his dissertation in 1923. Following his later foray into archaeology, Li compared the unearthed Shang human remains with earlier discoveries of Paleolithic Peking Man and others from the Zhoukoudian cave outside Beijing, along with contemporary studies of living Chinese and minorities, to determine once and for all the Han somatotype. Although he never succeeded, Li's work invoked the authority of science to credence belief in the Han,



reifying what had been a platonic revolutionary ideal by investing it with form and substance, thus concretizing a Chinese archetype. Although he never entirely abandoned anthropometry as the principal means of classifying China's peoples, over the course of half a century Li's historiography, much like the greater historiography spanning that time period, demonstrated a marked shift from assuming racial purity to asserting racial mutability.

Chapter four examines the Han narrative in the People's Republic of China following Mao's revolution in 1949. The communist regime proclaimed ethnic unity and equality even as the monumental state-sponsored ethnic identification project multiplied China's ethnic groups by a factor of ten and held the Han aloft as the vanguard of social evolution, a paradox that suggests New China ultimately failed to surmount the challenge of unity in diversity Sun faced decades earlier. In fact PRC narratives can be considered an extension of those from the Republican era, the continuity most clearly evident in the work of Fei Xiaotong, China's preeminent social scientist. In a close analysis of Fei's "snowball" theory, which became state-sanctioned orthodoxy, we find that his ideas closely parallel those of Chiang Kai-shek as laid out in *China's Destiny* some forty years earlier, including his emphasis on common origins for the Chinese people regardless of ethnicity, and a shared history of intermarriage and interaction, all of which has united the Chinese nation and overcome superficial cultural divisions. This narrative turn, which has been steadily developing since Sun's time, has now culminated in the current official PRC narrative as found in the state White Papers. But in comparing the official PRC narrative with those generated in contemporary Chinese political communities in Taiwan,

Hong Kong and Macao, although all are ostensibly parts of a single China, we find that all perceive the Han differently, reflecting their divergent visions of the Chinese nation.

The fifth and final chapter attempts to link elite discourse on Han identity, including academic and official narratives discussed in previous chapters, with contemporary popular conceptions of Han in the various Chinese political communities. Looking first to dictionary entries as an indicator of evolving definitions of Han, we see that these tend to follow changing elite definitions but provide a more accessible medium for the dissemination of ideas. The study concludes with a cursory survey of the meaning of Han among residents of the PRC, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao, with explicit comparisons to elite definitions within each region and contrasts among regions. On the whole this study, in examining interpretations of Han identity across temporal and spatial boundaries, reveals that the concept of Han is still fluid, evolving, and ultimately political. Han, like White or Caucasian in the US, indeed represents a social construct, but one with the power to convince a vast and variegated population that they belong to a single diasporic nation; conversely, deconstructing Han challenges the very foundation of the world's largest community.

## ARCHAEOLOGY: THE SHANG DYNASTY AS HAN HERITAGE, 1923-1930

At the turn of the twentieth century, as Chinese elites increasingly embraced nationalist discourse, many positivist youth turned to modern science as a means of composing China's national biography. Although antiquarianism enjoyed a venerable tradition in China stretching back a thousand years to the Song dynasty,<sup>56</sup> it was the May Fourth Movement in the early twentieth century, with its emphasis on scientific empiricism, that wedded an established regard for historical inquiry with new Western-derived methodologies and a nationalist impetus.<sup>57</sup> Li Chi, a member of the May Fourth generation, embodied this union of old and new, of native and foreign, which uniquely positioned him to pioneer Chinese archaeology,<sup>58</sup> a discipline dedicated to the search for Han origins.

Li Chi was born to a family of means in Hubei province in 1896. Li's father, an educator and servant of the imperial government, insisted that his son receive a proper Confucian education, and so employed an uncle who had attained the bureaucratic rank of *xiucai* to instruct the boy in classical literature beginning at the age of four. Later, Li's own father tutored him in poetry and history. Although Li described his early education as austere, it clearly laid the groundwork for his later pursuit of China's ancient past.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> R. C. Rudolph, "Preliminary Notes on Sung Archaeology," *Journal of Asian Studies* 22.2 (1963): 169-77; K. C. Chang, "Archaeology and Chinese Historiography," *World Archaeology* 13.2 (1981): 156-169.

<sup>57</sup> Xia Nai, "Wusi yundong he Zhongguo jindai kaoguxue de xingqi," *Kaogu* 3: 193-196; Li Chi, *Anyang* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 40.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-48.

<sup>59</sup> A brief and early autobiography of Li Chi is reproduced in K.C. Chang, "Li Ji: 1896-1979," *Asian Perspectives* 23.2 (1980): 317-21.

In 1907 Li Chi's father moved his family to the imperial capital in Beijing. In 1911, the year of the Xinhai Revolution, Li became part of the first group selected to attend Qinghua Academy, a joint Chinese-American enterprise funded by the Rockefeller Foundation with its campus located on the grounds of a former imperial garden on the outskirts of Beijing.<sup>60</sup> After eight years of coursework with the academy's foreign instructors, Li, now proficient in English, received a Boxer Indemnity scholarship for college education in the United States. At Clark University and later at Harvard, Li demonstrated his precociousness by earning three degrees in five years – a bachelors in psychology, a masters in sociology, and at the age of twenty-seven, China's first doctorate in anthropology, which he received in 1923.<sup>61</sup>

In accordance with the American-style “four fields” approach to anthropology, during his three years at Harvard, Li studied cultural anthropology with Roland B. Dixon (1875-1934), physical anthropology with Ernest A. Hooton (1887-1954), and archaeology with Alfred M. Tozzer (1877-1954). Li's dissertation, titled *The Formation of the Chinese People*, synthesized disciplinary methodologies while drawing on sources ranging from Chinese classical texts to biometrical statistics in formulating a metanarrative of the Chinese nation that would later become archaeology's *raison d'être*.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> 清華學堂, previously romanized as Tsinghua Academy. A history of this institution is found in Su Yunfeng, *Cong qing hua xue tang dao qing hua da xue* (Taipei: Academia Sinica Institute of Modern History, 1996). For information on Li Chi's relationship with Qinghua as both academy and university, see Li Guangmo, *Li Ji yu Qinghua* (Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe, 1994).

<sup>61</sup> Li Guangmo, *Li Ji Juan* (Shijia: Hebei Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1996), 2. Because of this, Li has been dubbed “modern China's first anthropologist.” See the postscript in K. C. Chang (Zhang Guangzhi) and Li Guangmo, eds., *Li Ji kaoguxue lunwen xuanji* (Wenwu chubanshe, 1990).

<sup>62</sup> For information on Li's early life and education see his memoirs: Li Ji, *Gan jiu lu* (Taipei: Zhuanji wenxue chubanshe, 1967), 1-47.

Proceeding from the putative binary of core and periphery derived from traditional cosmology and revolutionary rhetoric, in his thesis Li defined the Han (or “We group” to use his term) as “the group which the Chinese historians consider as their kind, the civilizers.” In contrast, the You group are those the We group refers to as “barbarians.” Li defined each in terms of origins: Geographically, the We group “are the people who are found in, or whose origin is traceable to, the land called China proper” while the You group reside in the periphery.<sup>63</sup> Li’s maps then provide graphic illustration of China’s heartland, “the Yellow River plain where the early history of China developed.”<sup>64</sup>

In addition to according the Han an ancestral home in the cradle of Chinese civilization, as a trained ethnologist Li also looked to culture to distinguish Han from Other. He described the peripheral peoples as “the horse-riding, kumiss-drinking, flesh-eating Hsiung-nus; the yak-driving Ch’iangs; the pig-rearing Tungus and the cattle-stealing Mongols...the tattooing Shan-speaking group, the cremating Tibeto-Burman-speaking group and the Kanlan-dwelling Mon-Khmer-speaking group,” all in contradistinction to the Han, the “the silk-wearing, rice-eating, and city building Descendents of the Yellow Emperor.”<sup>65</sup> Li’s inclusion of the Yellow Emperor indicates acceptance of the racial discourse of revolutionaries, as is his suggestion that the “genuine Chinese” possess a monosyllabic surname that represents one’s lineage traceable to the original inhabitants of the Central Plains.

But Li’s thesis was most important for adding a biological component to the definition of Chinese. Kai-wing Chow recently noted that “unlike racial theorists in

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<sup>63</sup> Li Chi, *The Formation of the Chinese People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), 7.

<sup>64</sup> Li Chi, *Anyang*, 39.

<sup>65</sup> Li Chi, *Formation of the Chinese People*, 275.

nineteenth-century Europe, Chinese revolutionaries did not always focus on grounding racial differences in biology,”<sup>66</sup> opting instead to focus on blood lineage. But as the pioneer of physical anthropology in China<sup>67</sup> Li grafted physical traits onto established lineage criteria, utilizing anthropometry to prove that biologically “the Descendents of the Yellow Emperor are strongly round-headed,” “decidedly leptorrhinic,” and therefore “brachycephalic-leptorrhine,” or broad-headed with a long, narrow nose.<sup>68</sup> In a later elaboration of Han features Li concluded that the Chinese, as a member of Blumenbach’s Mongoloid race, share a physiognomy, namely almond eye, Mongoloid folds, flattish forehead, depressed nasal root, broad cheek bone and flat face.<sup>69</sup>

Li’s dissertation became widely available, published by Harvard University Press in 1928 with a summary version appearing in Chinese. With this study Li offered new scientific backing for a narrative of the Han and the development of the Chinese nation. Li’s adviser at Harvard considered it the best dissertation the anthropology department had seen in twenty years, and Li himself said it is the only way to study the history of the Chinese race.<sup>70</sup> Over half a century later staple English language works on the Chinese people such as June Dreyer’s well known study *China’s Forty Millions*<sup>71</sup> and Leo Moser’s *The Chinese Mosaic*<sup>72</sup> continued to rely on Li’s definition of the Han, but his ideas more profoundly influenced his fellow Chinese. Although he would later move from pioneer of Chinese anthropology to father of Chinese archaeology, Li still placed Han firmly at the center of the Chinese nation both geographically and culturally.

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<sup>66</sup> Kai-wing Chow, “Imagining Boundaries of Blood” in Frank Dikotter, ed. *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 46, 52.

<sup>67</sup> Gregory Guldin, *The Saga of Anthropology in China* (Armonk: ME Sharpe, 1994), 62.

<sup>68</sup> Li Chi, *Formation of the Chinese People*, 282.

<sup>69</sup> Li Chi, “Racial History of the Chinese People” *Journal of the China Society* 6 (1969): 10.

<sup>70</sup> See IHP, *yuán* 25-10 for comments from both Hooton and Li.

<sup>71</sup> June Dreyer, *China’s Forty Millions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 283 n. 1.

<sup>72</sup> Leo J. Moser, *The Chinese Mosaic* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 13.

## The Advent of Chinese Archaeology

After his dissertation earned him the doctorate, Li immediately returned to China to take up a position at Nankai University in Tianjin where he began teaching such courses such as Fundamentals of Sociology, Introduction to Anthropology, and History of Evolutionary Anthropology.<sup>73</sup> In fall of 1923, during his first year as a professor, newspapers reported the discovery of a cache of ancient bronze vessels at Xinzheng (Hsin-cheng) county in Henan province, alleged birthplace of the Yellow Emperor and cradle of Chinese civilization. A number of interested parties eagerly descended on the site, among them one Carl Whiting Bishop, Associate Curator of the Freer Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution, who was then in China scouting for antiquities and opportunity for cooperation with Chinese scientists.<sup>74</sup> Upon his arrival, however, Bishop lamented that conditions in Xinzheng were “most deplorable, in that no trained investigator was present to show how the objects could be removed from their setting without injury to themselves and to note down the information brought to light in the course of the digging but now, of course, lost forever.”<sup>75</sup> After describing the unique and fine workmanship of the vessels he noted that although around one hundred were unearthed many had disappeared, and the tools of the local militia that had eagerly taken over the dig “irretrievably ruined the finest specimens,” reducing them to mere chunks of metal. He

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<sup>73</sup> Guldin cites Chen Yinghuang as the first to teach anthropology courses in China (pp. 25-6), but Li was teaching anthropology even earlier. See note 26 below.

<sup>74</sup> Biographical information on Bishop can be found in C. Martin Wilbur, “In Memoriam: Carl Whiting Bishop” *Far Eastern Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (Feb. 1943): 204-7.

<sup>75</sup> Carl Whiting Bishop, “The Bronzes of Hsin-cheng Hsien” *The Chinese Social and Political Science Review* 8.2 (April 1924), 83.

went on to say that “even among the larger and more massive pieces the damage done is simply unbelievable unless seen. In fact I was told that the diggers deliberately broke up numbers of objects in the hope that they might turn out to be of gold.”<sup>76</sup> All this led him to call for the establishment of “a school of Chinese archaeology, supported by Chinese and foreign institutions alike, both for the training of a force of competent field workers and for the undertaking of a systematic study of the still remaining traces of man’s former existence in this country.”<sup>77</sup>

Coincidentally, at that same time in Beijing, Li Chi had just received funds from VK Ting (Ding Wenjiang), a friend and British-trained geologist, to travel to Xinzheng and initiate the first native Chinese archaeological excavation.<sup>78</sup> Like Bishop, Li was disappointed to find that others had already plundered the site of all marketable antiquities, but as a physical anthropologist he became interested in the discarded human skeletal remains.<sup>79</sup> Li’s scientific analysis of these remains and the site in general greatly impressed Bishop, who began consulting with Li about the prospects of future cooperation.<sup>80</sup> Their chance meeting at Xinzheng would culminate in the realization of both Li’s dream of developing Chinese archaeology and Bishop’s goal of international scientific collaboration.

As China’s first anthropologist Li had already attracted the interest of China’s elites, largely concentrated in Beijing, including such political and intellectual luminaries

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 98-99.

<sup>78</sup> Li Chi, *Anyang* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 55. VK Ting was supervisor to Swedish geologist JG Andersson when the latter excavated the painted pottery culture at Yangshao, which proved to be the monumental discovery of Neolithic culture in China. For Andersson’s own account of the discovery see J. G. Andersson, *Children of the Yellow Earth* (London: Paul, Trench, and Trubner, 1934). For a biography of Ting see Charlotte Furth, *Ting Wen-chiang: Science and China’s New Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970).

<sup>79</sup> Bishop, “The Bronzes of Hsin-cheng Hsien,” 85. See also Li Chi, *Anyang*, 55-56.

<sup>80</sup> Bishop, 91.



as Hu Shi and Liang Qichao.<sup>81</sup> In April 1925, when Qinghua Academy became a university, Liang and others invited Li to join them at the university's newly established National Studies Research Institute<sup>82</sup> as a specially appointed lecturer in anthropology. Due to his training in the “four fields” style of American anthropology Li taught some of China's first courses on physical anthropology, ethnology, and archaeology, thus establishing an anthropology curriculum in his homeland.<sup>83</sup> In his first archaeology lecture Li encouraged the diligent study of Chinese history in order to show the world's academic community just how the Chinese people have contributed to the development of humankind. “Speaking archaeologically, all of China is like gold, but no one is investigating. If we have people investigating, then Chinese history, which we now emphatically claim to be five thousand years old, may yet in the future turn out to be over 125,000 years old!”<sup>84</sup> The exciting potential of this new discipline appealed to many Qinghua students including Wu Jinding, who took Li as his principal adviser. Five years later Wu would secure his place in the annals of Chinese archaeology with his discovery of the Longshan black pottery culture in Shandong province.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Li Guangmo, “Li Ji zhuan lue,” 157.

<sup>82</sup> , predecessor of Qinghua's current . An alternate translation is “Sinological Studies Institute.”

<sup>83</sup> These courses included General Anthropology, Anthropometry 人體測量, Ethnology 人文學, and most interestingly, 北方民族漢化之程序 (The Hanification Process of Northern Peoples). Hanhua is usually translated into English as “sinification” or “sinicization” but this again conflates Han and Chinese. It would more accurately translate as “hanification”). Li Chi's seminal role in this history has been largely ignored in PRC literature due to his alignment with the Nationalist government. This proclivity is reflected in Gregory Guldin's history of Chinese anthropology, which relies heavily on Chinese secondary sources. For Guldin's account see *The Saga of Anthropology in China* (Armonk: ME Sharpe, 1994), 26. For detailed information on Li's anthropology courses see 清華學校國學研究院教務會議記錄 1925 (hereafter AQU). Summaries are found in Su, 335; Li Guangmo, *Li Ji juan*, 731; and Ge Zhaoguang, *Qing hua han xue yan jiu* (Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe, 1994), 283-284.

<sup>84</sup> *Qing hua zhou kan* #375 (April 16, 1926). See also Sun Dunheng, ed. *Qing hua guo xue yan jiu yuan shi hua* (Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe, 2002), 95.

<sup>85</sup> In 1930 Li Chi, at the behest of his former student, supervised the excavation of the Chengziyai site.

Meanwhile Carl Whiting Bishop maintained contact and correspondence with Li, a relationship culminating with an invitation to join the Smithsonian as a field worker in China while allowing Li to retain his teaching position at Qinghua. Ostensibly Bishop's greatest interest lay in furthering both scientific inquiry and mutual cooperation between their two nations; Li, however, harbored misgivings about striking a bargain with Bishop. For decades, foreign adventurers had absconded from China with a quantity of relics which then turned up in Western (and Japanese) museums and private collections, an episode the Chinese still consider an imperialist outrage.<sup>86</sup> Due to this legacy, "Chinese authorities were suspicious of independent foreign scientific expeditions and especially objected to exportation from the country of valuable artifacts and specimens unearthed by outsiders."<sup>87</sup> To the Chinese these men "were no more than shameless adventurers who robbed them of their history,"<sup>88</sup> their memories now emblematic of Western domination. Li himself complained: "Old China, for centuries a hunting spot for European imperialism, was forced to open her door widely for whatever the 'superior white power' liked to do, including field work in science."<sup>89</sup> Such scientific imperialism spawned China's academic nationalism, with modernizing intellectuals like Li resolutely committed to building the Chinese nation by protecting and glorifying its patrimony.

With this legacy of imperialist predation Li remained justifiably wary of joining forces with foreigners, but China at the time lacked any indigenous sponsorship for archaeology and this offer posed a rare opportunity. After preliminary discussion of the terms and with encouragement from VK Ting, Li agreed to work for the Freer on two

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<sup>86</sup> See Peter Hopkirk, *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980).

<sup>87</sup> Furth, *Ting Wen-chiang*, 53.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>89</sup> Li Chi, *Anyang*, 34.

conditions: First, excavation would be under the auspices of a Chinese institution, with the Freer providing only funds; and second, that no relics could leave the country. The Freer could only expect an English report from Li for which they would hold publication rights. To this the two sides amiably agreed, thus inaugurating Sino-American scientific collaboration in the field of archaeology.<sup>90</sup>

That winter, in 1925-1926, Qinghua University and the Freer Gallery of Art jointly dispatched Li to Shanxi province. There Li discovered and excavated a Neolithic Yangshao site, part of the painted pottery culture made famous by J.G. Andersson a few years earlier.<sup>91</sup> Unlike Li's initial attempt at field archaeology in Xinzheng, this Xiyincun expedition proved a groundbreaking success in every sense of the phrase, and the fruits of the joint venture seemed to bode well for continuing the alliance. A preliminary English report, authored by Li, appeared in the Smithsonian's annual publication.<sup>92</sup> Qinghua University granted Li use of a room to display the unearthed artifacts,<sup>93</sup> marking a rather modest beginning to his career as museum curator and earning him recognition as the "father" of Chinese archaeology.<sup>94</sup> His achievement also prompted Liang Qichao to send a letter to his son Liang Siyong, then studying archaeology with Alfred V. Kidder at

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<sup>90</sup> *Qinghua Zhoukan* #366 publicized the agreement. See also Ge, 291 and Li Chi, *Anyang*, 56.

<sup>91</sup> Two works offer a good overview of the discovery of the Yangshao culture. In English, see Andersson's own account in *Children of the Yellow Earth* (London: Paul, Trench and Trubner, 1934). A more recent reflection that offers historical context for this discovery is found in Chen Xingcan, *Zhongguo shi qian kao gu xue shi yan jiu* (Beijing: Shenghuo, dushu, xinzhi, sanlian shudian, 1997), chapter 2.

<sup>92</sup> *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1928), 11-12. Hereafter *Annual Report*.

<sup>93</sup> AQU, 1925.

<sup>94</sup> Li Guangmo, *Li Ji juan* (Shijia: Hebei Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1996), 2; Zhang Guangzhi, *Kaogu renleixue suibi* (Beijing: Sanlian shuju, 1999), 8-9. It has been argued that China's first archaeology courses and fieldwork are associated with Ma Heng at Peking University (see Xia, 195; Guldin, 27). However, it is also generally recognized that Ma's work was closer to antiquarianism than modern scientific archaeology and had only limited impact on the subsequent development of Chinese archaeology. Although Fu Sinian, discussed below, considered appointing Ma head of the Academia Sinica's Archaeology Section, in the end he found Li more qualified (Xia, 195; K.C. Chang, "Li Chi: 1896-1979," *Asian Perspectives* 23.2 (1980): 319).

Harvard, advising him to return to study with the fully qualified and now credible Li Chi; the younger Liang later followed his father's advice, and for the next twenty years he and Li together pursued China's ancient past.<sup>95</sup>

Later that same year, in October of 1926, Li Chi and others within China's scientific community convened in Beijing in honor of a visit from the Crown Prince of Sweden, then president of the International Association of Archaeology. It was before this distinguished audience that the famous discovery of Peking Man was first announced. For this historic gathering Liang Qichao, whom Li characterized as an archaeology enthusiast, delivered an address entitled "Archaeology in China," in which he suggested "for the present, what we can hope to do is to train experts and improve our tools so that when the opportunity comes we can immediately set to work.... We hope that in the near future all the institutions for higher learning will provide for the special subject of archaeology in their curricula and that we will adopt the methods of western scholars," meaning in part transcending the work of traditional antiquarians by employing the natural sciences. Liang continued: "With a large country like China, with such a long history and such an abundance of hidden treasures as China has, I am sure we are destined to play the most important part in the archaeological world."<sup>96</sup> Although for most in attendance their thoughts certainly focused on Peking Man, Liang's prediction proved prescient in another way—within a decade Li Chi would travel to Stockholm at the invitation of this same Swedish royal, Crown Prince Gustaf VI Adolf, to lecture on his archaeological achievements in China.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Li Guangmo, *Li Ji zhuan lue*, 159.

<sup>96</sup> *Annual Report 1926*, 466.

<sup>97</sup> For more on Sweden's role in Chinese archaeology see Magnus Fiskesjö, "The Sweden Connection: Swedish Scholars in Chinese Archaeology" in Deng Cong and Chen Xingcan, eds., *Taoli chengxi ji* :

## Academe, State, and Nation

Scholars have long observed that states appropriate archaeology to serve their own, often nationalistic, ends, and Lothar von Falkenhausen and others have shown that China offers no exception.<sup>98</sup> But some have erroneously suggested that the communist regime marked a new era of state involvement in archaeology. Cheng Te-kun suggested that 1949 “marks a new era in Chinese archaeology, characterized by full government support,”<sup>99</sup> and KC Chang concurred that since the establishment of New China “archaeology has become a state-directed enterprise, bureaucratically, financially, and ideologically.”<sup>100</sup> Archaeology in China in fact served state interests from its inception.<sup>101</sup>

Since the dissolution of the Qing dynasty in the preceding decade warlords had kept China politically fragmented, but in summer of 1926, the same year as Li’s excavation at Xiyincun, Chiang Kai-shek initiated the Northern Campaign, a bid to reunify all of China through use of military force. As success of the Northern Campaign

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*Festschrift for Professor An Zhimin on his 80th Birthday* (Hong Kong: Centre for Chinese Archaeology and Art Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2004), 12-21. (In English).

<sup>98</sup> See Bruce G. Trigger, “Alternative Archaeologies: Nationalist, Colonialist, Imperialist,” *Man* 19, no. 3 (1984): 355-370; Don D. Fowler, “Uses of the Past,” *American Antiquity* 52, no. 2 (1987): 229-248; Philip L. Kohl, “Nationalism and Archaeology: On the Constructions of Nations and the Reconstructions of the Remote Past,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 27 (1998): 223-246. For a discussion of Chinese archaeology in particular see Lothar von Falkenhausen, “The Regionalist Paradigm in Chinese Archaeology” in Philip Kohl and Clare Fawcett, eds., *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); von Falkenhausen, “On the Historiographical Orientation of Chinese Archaeology,” *Antiquity* 67 (1993): 839-49; Tong Enzheng, “Thirty Years of Chinese Archaeology” in Philip Kohl and Clare Fawcett, ed., *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>99</sup> Cheng Te-kun, “Archaeology in Communist China,” *China Quarterly* no. 23 (1965): 67-77.

<sup>100</sup> KC Chang, “Archaeology and Chinese Historiography,” *World Archaeology* 13.2 (1981): 156-169.

<sup>101</sup> JG Andersson’s discovery and excavation of the Neolithic Yangshao culture received state funding as early as 1921. See Magnus Fiskesjö and Chen Xingcan, *China Before China: Johan Gunnar Andersson, Ding Wenjiang, and the Discovery of China’s Prehistory* (Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 2004).

grew imminent, the GMD party set about establishing a political framework for governing the newly reunited nation. At the 1927 ROC Central Political Meeting Cai Yuanpei, a distinguished civil servant under the Qing and Minister of Education under the Republic, proposed the establishment of a National Central Research Institute within the Executive Yuan, the foremost branch of the Republican government. As part of the Executive Yuan, the head of state (then Chairman of the State Council) would personally appoint the president of Academia Sinica as he does other members of his cabinet.<sup>102</sup> Chiang Kai-shek selected Cai Yuanpei as first president of Academia Sinica, who in turn recruited leaders among China's intelligentsia to advise the central government in formulating national policy. Structurally, Cai divided the Academia Sinica into a number of institutes, with each institute further subdivided into sections. Within the Institute of History and Philology Cai created an Archaeology Section, headed by Li Chi, thus marking the institutionalization of archaeology in China *by the state as part of the state*.<sup>103</sup> Li presciently said of this development: "I believe this will prove to be a real beginning of serious archaeological work in China."<sup>104</sup>

Indeed the first *national* or state-directed excavation occurred soon after. Antiquarians had traced "dragon bones"—inscribed tortoise shells and ox scapulae used anciently for divination—to the Anyang area of Henan province in the Yellow River valley. Fu Sinian, director of the Institute of History and Philology, sent Dong Zuobin, a self-educated oracle bone specialist and epigrapher, to Anyang to conduct a preliminary

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<sup>102</sup> *China Handbook 1937-45* (Chongqing: Chinese Ministry of Information, 1945), 97.

<sup>103</sup> The Archaeology Section was also known more simply as the third section, the first two being history and philology.

<sup>104</sup> IHP, *kao* 21-2-9.

survey and assess its potential as an excavation site. Upon joining him Li was horrified to find that

not being a trained archaeologist, he [Dong] worked in a rather haphazard manner...there was no planning whatsoever; stratification was not at all observed. It is obvious that his digging was in no way different from the curio dealers' except that it was backed up by the government.<sup>105</sup>

Despite his lack of training, Dong's recovery of inscribed bones, carved stonework, and pottery fragments, along with reports of bronzes in the area, suggested to Li the value of the site and he resolved to assume directorship of the dig the following spring, for what became the second season of excavation. After his meeting with Dong, Li wrote Bishop announcing: "I have just returned from a two week trip to Henan and am now in the position to give the best of news that can be given in the field of archaeology in China."<sup>106</sup> He went on to relate the discovery of the "Ruin of Yin," capital of the ancient Shang dynasty [circa 1700-1200 BCE], with its royal tombs and now famous bronzes used in ritual sacrifice. Although classical histories made reference to Shang kings, Li's excavation, like Schliemann's discovery of Troy, established the historicity of a civilization earlier relegated to myth.<sup>107</sup>

Considering that the finds at Anyang offered the opportunity of a lifetime for an aspiring archaeologist, it seems curious that within a year Li resigned as director of the excavation. Its scientific and historical importance seem obvious, but soon the political significance of Anyang became clear as three museums vied over control of the ancient Shang remains. This controversy remains important because it facilitated a revolutionary

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<sup>105</sup> FGA, letter from Li to Bishop dated 28 November 1928.

<sup>106</sup> FGA, B:2-1, letter dated Dec. 21, 1928.

<sup>107</sup> Millard Rogers of the Seattle Art Museum first made this comparison in his preface to Li Chi, *The Beginnings of Chinese Civilization* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1957). It was primarily Gu Jiegang and the "doubting antiquity" school 疑古派 who had insisted on the inauthenticity of conventional accounts of China's prehistory.

transition—the modern state’s appropriation of relics for construction of a national identity.

### **Domestic Controversy: Primacy of the Nation**

Although a preliminary survey of Anyang had yielded inscribed bones, stone works, pottery fragments, and further reports of bronzes in the area, all of which assured Li of the site’s archaeological potential, he confessed that “the only factor that I feel uncertain about is the political situation for which I am as unprepared and helpless as before an earthquake.”<sup>108</sup> At that time much of northern China remained under the control of Feng Yuxiang, a local warlord, whose allegiance to Chiang remained dubious. Moreover Dong Zuobin and Guo Baojun, who had participated in the initial survey, were both locals while Li hailed from Hubei and would be viewed as an outsider. In the interest of preventing conflict the Academia Sinica sent official notice to the Henan provincial and county authorities, informing them that the excavation was “national business” that should not be obstructed.<sup>109</sup> Despite these orders word of Anyang’s treasures spread quickly, and in October of 1929 He Rizhang,<sup>110</sup> head of the provincial library and curator of the provincial museum in Kaifeng, brought with him to Anyang eighty workers, initiating his own excavation at the same site. Following a confrontation of the rival parties, the provincial government issued an order for Li to halt *his* excavation,

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<sup>108</sup> FGA, B: 2-3.

<sup>109</sup> IHP, *yuan* 25-3.

<sup>110</sup> 何日章



stipulating that He Rizhang and the Henan Museum had the sole right to excavate.<sup>111</sup>

Worse yet, in an effort to sway public opinion, a provincial newspaper impugned Li's character and motives by accusing him of smuggling relics out of the province, calling him both an "evil person" and a "thief."<sup>112</sup>

Li, astonished to find himself accused of smuggling, retorted: "The fact is, our section was established by the central government as part of the National Research Institute,"<sup>113</sup> and therefore "we are sent by the central government and not working secretly." Li admitted that he had shipped some items to the IHP office in Beijing for analysis because the field office lacked proper equipment, but the greater part of the relics were sitting in the local school which served as an ad hoc warehouse. He explained that he planned to establish a local museum to house the artifacts where they could be "publicly presented to the national citizens."<sup>114</sup> Speaking rhetorically, he asked: "If this is smuggling, can the tomb raiders of Luoyang be called legitimate? Why does the provincial government follow us around instead of investigating them?" He then answers his own question, concluding that "the Henan government doesn't care about thirty years of tomb robbing but they also don't support academic work and our public excavation as scientific study."<sup>115</sup>

The real problem, Li observed, was that "local authorities disregard (look lightly on) the central authority,"<sup>116</sup> essentially complaining against the enduring parochialism of

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<sup>111</sup> IHP, *yuan* 148-4. The museum was known by several names, including 河南博物館, 省立博物館, and 民族博物館.

<sup>112</sup> Li makes reference to this in IHP, *yuan* 141-2b.

<sup>113</sup> IHP, *kao* 23-1.

<sup>114</sup> IHP, *yuan* 141-2b.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> IHP, *kao* 23-1.

the warlord era and a general lack of vision of the greater Chinese nation. To his superiors Li explained:

This problem is not limited to Henan; wherever we go we will have this problem of dealing with local governments. They will react the same way, and there is nowhere we can work. I alone cannot convince them of the central government's intent to promote scholarship and overcome parochialism. I cannot stand by and watch a few unscientific people ruin the work, so I ask to be relieved of this responsibility.<sup>117</sup>

In response to his frustrated threat of resignation, the central government cabled encouraging Li to continue work,<sup>118</sup> which he agreed to do only on condition that the government order the provincial and local authorities to lend support to his archaeology section. Li further demanded that the Ministry of Internal Affairs form a National Antiquities Protection Committee<sup>119</sup> and that he, as head of the archaeology section, be given command of seventy-eight soldiers and eighteen officers paid for with government funds to protect the site and the artifacts.<sup>120</sup> Clearly for Li, the central government should serve as the penultimate authority in curating the nation's relics.

The executive branch of the Republic of China, under Chiang Kai-shek's direct authority, issued an official regulation granting Li Chi's requests.<sup>121</sup> After commenting that it was "strange" for a provincial or local authority to issue orders to the Academia Sinica, an organ of the central government, the document ordered the provincial government to stop the unofficial excavation of He Rizhang and to shift support to Li.<sup>122</sup> This power struggle between the state and local institutions suggests that before the modern period, without a concept of the nation, there was of course no sense that relics

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<sup>117</sup> IHP, *yuan* 141-2b.

<sup>118</sup> IHP, *kao* 23-7.

<sup>119</sup> 中央古物保管委員會.

<sup>120</sup> IHP, 23-3.

<sup>121</sup> IHP, *yuan* 145-5b, 145-6b, 151-33b.

<sup>122</sup> IHP, *kao* 31-5-8.

belong to the nation. The novel idea that the state, as an embodiment of the nation's will, could lay claim to relics evidently required new legislation and even military enforcement.

### **International Controversy: Scientific Imperialism**

Even as Li contended with the province for recognition of state authority he soon found himself battling the very benefactor who had helped launch his career. As individuals Li Chi and Carl Whiting Bishop were both archaeologists, museum curators with similar interests and, in their own words, friends.<sup>123</sup> By 1928 they had also worked profitably together for three years with little difficulty. But political events of 1928, specifically the success of the Northern Campaign and subsequent establishment of the Academia Sinica, soon drove a wedge into their partnership. As Li himself succinctly put it, “in place of the Qinghua Research Institute, I am now working in the name of the National Research Institute.”<sup>124</sup> In fact when Li joined the Academia Sinica he became a part of the Chinese government, while the Freer, as part of the Smithsonian, was a US state institution; Li's acceptance of both appointments made him simultaneously an employee of the Chinese and US governments. Although both institutions purported to pursue an objective, immutable, universal and otherwise idealized “science,” to his dismay Li soon found himself torn between their irreconcilable agendas. The dispute that developed, though borne out between individuals and their respective research organizations, came to symbolize the greater contest of nations.

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<sup>123</sup> See *Anyang* p. 56 for Li's statement, and IHP, *kao* 21-2-1 and *yuan* 52-8, for Bishop's.

<sup>124</sup> The original document uses the alternate Tsinghua spelling.

Neither side seemed ignorant of the wider implications of the new union. Bishop clearly envisioned himself not only in a scientific role but a political one as well, viewing the alliance as a diplomatic opportunity for forging and reinforcing ties between the two governments. The prospect of working directly with the Chinese mirror of his own institution seemed an extraordinary opportunity. He told Li, “There isn’t much that we can do at this end to help establish a cordial *modus vivendi* with the Chinese Government; but that little, we are doing to the best of our ability.”<sup>125</sup> He admitted that “official relations between the United States and China are of course in the hands of our Department of State,” but went on to say: “It has given me particular pleasure, therefore, that just at present there should have been appointed to take charge of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs, a close friend of mine,” one Dr. Stanley K. Hornbeck. Bishop then suggested that his own work with Li and the Academia Sinica “may prove to lead to developments of the highest importance, not merely to the scientific world alone, but to the development of improved relations of every sort between China and America.”<sup>126</sup>

Echoing Bishop’s optimism, Li believed that “when scientists agree to cooperate, fruitful results seem to be a matter of course.”<sup>127</sup> He felt that the “contributions” and “service” of foreign scientists is valued by “their close contact with Chinese minds...consequently the cumulative effects soon become overwhelming and irresistible.”<sup>128</sup> In his letters to Bishop Li offered assurances that Academia Sinica leadership “realize the importance of cooperating with foreign scientists” and that securing permission to work with the Freer was not in question. In describing his meeting

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<sup>125</sup> IHP, *kao* 21-2-8.

<sup>126</sup> IHP, *kao* 21-2-1.

<sup>127</sup> Li Chi, *Anyang* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 44.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

with Cai Yuanpei, president of Academia Sinica, Li said: “I had a whole hour with him and tried my best to explain and interpret the spirit of the Smithsonian Institution, particularly the good will of the Freer Gallery.”<sup>129</sup> There was even talk of more extensive collaboration between the Academia Sinica and the Smithsonian, in areas such as physics and chemistry, because other departments “could also be benefited by the experience of the American scientists.”<sup>130</sup> For his part Li seemed in every respect supportive of the union, at least in his correspondence with Bishop.

But a closer reading of Bishop’s correspondence alludes to issues plaguing both their interpersonal relationship and that of their respective nations. In one letter he wrote: “Your statements in regard to the attitude of the Southern Government toward scientific study seem to be well founded, and I hope that some arrangement may be brought about whereby we may be able to *assist* in every way possible.”<sup>131</sup> Bishop further affirmed that his colleagues in Washington were “actuated by feelings of genuine friendliness and no less by the desire to *assist* in every way to extricate China from the difficulties necessarily attendant upon her present effort to achieve the fullest and richest degree of cultural growth that she can attain.”<sup>132</sup> While his terms seem very agreeable, one could interpret Bishop’s inference of China’s need for US “assistance” as arrogant and patronizing. Worse, although Bishop intended to extend cooperation beyond academics into the political realm, the Chinese seemed to chafe at the idea of the US government involving itself in what the Chinese considered, in Li’s words, “national business.”<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> FGA, B:1-2, dated Nov. 28, 1928.

<sup>130</sup> FGA, B:1-3.

<sup>131</sup> IHP, *kao* 21-2-1, dated March 10, 1928. Italicized for emphasis.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> IHP, *juan* 25-3. Here Li refers to his excavation of Anyang as 國辦.

## The Dispute: 爭先恐後

Fortunately for Li and, as it turns out, unfortunately for Bishop, the dissolution of Qinghua University's National Studies Research Institute in 1928 happened to coincide with the founding of the Nanjing government and subsequent establishment of the Academia Sinica. Although the Freer continued to provide funds for his excavations, now undertaken at Anyang, the two institutions lacked a formal contract, so in autumn of 1929 Li wrote Bishop to say: "I think that the time is ripe to consider planning of bringing the cooperation of the Freer Gallery and the Institute of History and Philology a step further and closer,"<sup>134</sup> thus inviting Bishop to negotiate terms with the Academia Sinica.

A number of drafts then passed between the two sides, but at length both parties settled on an agreement that stipulated, among other points, that: The excavation would be directed by the Chinese side; that all objects discovered belong to the *state*; and with regard to publications, the Academia Sinica would publish the Chinese version of reports while the Freer would publish an English version.<sup>135</sup> Both parties readily agreed to the terms, but the Academia Sinica offered a two part addendum: First, that the Freer publication carry the expression "English version" on its cover. On this Bishop dissembled because it would effectively relegate the Freer to a translation service rather than joint sponsor of the Anyang excavation. Secondly, the Chinese side insisted that all articles authored by members of the Academia Sinica "bear the official titles of the authors in the said Institute."<sup>136</sup> Earlier Smithsonian publications had referred to Li as "Dr.

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<sup>134</sup> IHP, *kao* 21-2-12, letter dated Aug. 31, 1929.

<sup>135</sup> IHP, *yuan* 52-4.

<sup>136</sup> IHP, *yuan* 52-7.

Chi Li, of the Freer Gallery of Art Expedition to China”<sup>137</sup> and a “Chinese member of the Freer Gallery field staff”<sup>138</sup>—never at any time was Li’s Qinghua University or Academia Sinica position mentioned, thus making him appear to be exclusively an employee of the Smithsonian Institution. Now, however, the Chinese side insisted that in Smithsonian reports Li, both as the director of Anyang and the author of official reports on the historic excavation, bear his Academia Sinica title *rather than* that of the Freer Gallery. Li soon found himself caught in the middle of a dispute between the two institutions over what seems a trifle, but the question of *title*—whether he was associated with the Freer or the Academia Sinica—prompted each side to claim both Li and the Anyang excavation as their own.

Like others of his generation, Li Chi believed in a Darwinian competition among nations, and a positivist view that science was the key to progress and national salvation. He endeavored to strengthen the Chinese nation by establishing the sciences, particularly archaeology, under the patronage of the state with Chinese scholars studying Chinese artifacts. In trying to negotiate this new contract with the Academia Sinica Li tried to explain to Bishop:

The psychology of the whole situation is somewhat subtle; it needs a great deal of sympathy to fully understand it. On the Chinese side, the promoters of this organization realize only too clearly how far behind the other nations China is at present, in the development of modern science. At the same time they are very sensitive, almost excessively, to the injuries which the modern nations have done to China in the past two hundred years. So it is a sort of ‘inferiority complex’ mixed with acute nationalism that makes the Chinese side of the whole situation difficult to handle.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> *Annual Report 1927*, p. 11.

<sup>138</sup> *Annual Report 1928*, pp. 21, 22, and 69; *Annual Report 1929*, pp. 17 and 55.

<sup>139</sup> FGA, B:1-1, with minor changes to update the language.

Here Li admits that the Chinese side *was* committed to science but *for the express purpose of building up the nation*. Bishop never did appreciate this drive to nationalize the sciences—instead he continued to insist on Freer involvement in Anyang, sending \$3,000 to initiate work and offering \$10,000 per annum to continue the project.<sup>140</sup>

Despite limiting Freer participation to funds Li seemed uneasy. When consulting with Fu Sinian, head of the IHP and therefore Li's immediate superior whom he characterized as "my greatest and most helpful ally,"<sup>141</sup> Li confessed: "I think it is inappropriate for us to rely completely on US funding considering our government's promotion of academics," deciding instead that "we can only *temporarily* accept US funds."<sup>142</sup> Li never did apprise Bishop of his intention to sever Freer support, and in a private letter to Fu he revealed his reasons:

My own suggestion is that when we cooperate with foreigners, we should have our own agenda. They seem polite, but they think themselves more experienced than us, so they consider us poor children for whom they are doing a favor. They think they are omnipotent...but it makes us feel awkwardly inferior. We should try as much as possible to escape their influence, otherwise we are like ape-men, walking before them hunched over [in obeisance] and patiently awaiting the powers of evolution to make us real people. Maybe the next generation (my son) can overturn this submission; we must put our hopes in that.<sup>143</sup>

Li already possessed a motive for quitting the Freer, but until establishment of the Academia Sinica he lacked the means. The ensuing contract dispute merely afforded a pretext for Li to finally extricate himself from an imperialist (read foreign) agenda and

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<sup>140</sup> IHP, *yuan* 25-3, emphasis added.

<sup>141</sup> IHP, *kao* 21-2-9.

<sup>142</sup> IHP, *yuan* 25-3.

<sup>143</sup> IHP, 25-10.



continue his work under the sole auspices of a Chinese organization; Anyang would then belong to China.<sup>144</sup>

### **Resignation: 退避三舍**

In the 1929 Smithsonian report the Freer Gallery concluded: “Political conditions in China have improved steadily during the year, and it may be confidently expected that the Freer Gallery’s work in the field may now be carried on without interruption of any kind.”<sup>145</sup> Of course, the “political conditions” referred to involve the end of the warlord era and reassertion of a central political authority over all of China. The Freer Gallery had won to its side the Academia Sinica, the intellectual arm of the Chinese government much like the Smithsonian of the US, hence the prediction of a bright future. Ironically, by the time this message went to press, the joint venture had already deteriorated due in great part to this same change in political conditions.

On Feb. 22, 1930, Li confessed to Bishop: “I have found myself in a quite impossible situation,” and then went on to inform Bishop of his desire to resign. He did not elaborate the problem, and in his memoirs fifty years later he says only:

What concerned me particularly was the failure of the Institute of History and Philology and the Freer Gallery of Art to reach an agreement on continuing archaeological investigation in north China. When this regrettable cessation of the cooperative undertaking happened, my position became obviously untenable. So I resigned my Freer Gallery job.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Because of Freer involvement in Li’s projects up to this time, the Longshan site at Chengziyai proudly claims the very nationalistic distinction of being the first fully indigenous archaeological project.

<sup>145</sup> *Annual Report 1929*, pp. 17 and 55.

<sup>146</sup> Li Chi, *Anyang*, 68.

In his response to Li's resignation Bishop sympathized with a professed "desire to make Chinese scholarship appreciated in other countries as it deserves to be." He then acknowledged a general ignorance of China and the Chinese language among Americans, further encouraging Li to write an English report to remedy this. It seems that Bishop appealed to Li's desire for recognition of Chinese scholarship in order to secure an English report, perhaps fearing Li would generate only a Chinese one now that he no longer worked for the Freer. And in fact, although the Smithsonian's Annual Report had for years promised a full report from Li, it never materialized.<sup>147</sup> Instead in 1931 the Smithsonian projected a detailed report on these excavations from Carl Whiting Bishop.

But Li harbored other concerns. Bishop suggested as much when he offered to contribute an introduction "making it quite clear that from its inception the work on the Anyang site was carried on by Chinese archaeologists," and that "the Freer Gallery of Art was able to contribute financially to the undertaking in no way alters the fact that its execution was *solely* due to the effective work of Chinese scientists."<sup>148</sup> Clearly Li feared that the Freer's association with Anyang would make it seem an American project rather than a Chinese one, with Li and other Chinese scholars serving a foreign organization or worse, a foreign government. Ultimately Li found Bishop's arguments entirely unpersuasive.

In desperation, Bishop began courting Fu Sinian, Li's superior at the Academia Sinica and a reputable historian in his own right, requesting permission to publish an English translation of his report. But Li Chi was the archaeologist, director of the excavation, and therefore the key player, and without him the Freer had been cut out of

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<sup>147</sup> See for instance the *Annual Report 1927*, pp. 26 and 65; and *Annual Report 1929*, p. 55.

<sup>148</sup> FGA, Feb 25, 1930. Italics added.

the Anyang project altogether. Bishop no doubt had to account for a lack of return on his considerable investments of both time and money;<sup>149</sup> indeed, according to both Bishop's estimates and a record of field accounts, Li spent nearly \$4,000 in US funds during the eight months that the Freer was involved with Anyang, and this during the Great Depression.<sup>150</sup> Following Li's resignation the candor of Bishop's correspondence changed considerably, his ire manifested in messages filled with demands and thinly veiled threats. The climax of the drama played out in two letters, the first issued by Bishop and the second a rejoinder from Fu Sinian, presented here as a dialogue.

Bishop opened his message accusing Fu of "not wishing it to be known at present that the excavation at An-yang was conducted *jointly* by the Academia Sinica and the Freer Gallery of Art," and again: "I can assure you that I quite sympathize with your desire to make the An-yang excavation *appear to have been* the enterprise of the Academia Sinica alone, for reasons connected with politics."<sup>151</sup> These statements, as well as his pejorative reference to those involved in the Anyang excavation as "Chinese students," contrast markedly with his earlier declaration that "execution was solely due to the effective work of Chinese scientists." To this Fu responded: "It was never in my mind to consider the excavation a joint enterprise," and therefore he would not hesitate to "claim the whole credit and that has nothing to do with political reasons." Fu then made it clear that the excavation "was not undertaken at the initiative of the Freer Gallery of Art, whose help was by no means indispensable," and "if any claim for initiating or

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<sup>149</sup> See for instance FGA March 5, 1931.

<sup>150</sup> IHP, *kao* 21-2-12.

<sup>151</sup> FGA, March 5, 1931. Italics added.

conducting the excavation at Anyang [on the part of the Freer] appears in print, I will consider it my duty to give out an official denial.”<sup>152</sup>

Bishop’s original letter went on to say: “I think, however, that in justice to the Freer Gallery of Art, in view of the relatively large sums expended by it in connection with the An-yang excavation, it should have some return for its effort,” more specifically an English report from Li. Noting that the Smithsonian publications have a worldwide distribution, Bishop then warned: “I can not undertake to prevent the publication of reports by the Smithsonian Institution regarding either the field work done on the An-yang site or the sum of money expended there.” He then recounted all excavation expenditures put out by the Freer, explaining that “for all this, the Freer Gallery of Art naturally expects some return.”<sup>153</sup> Fu, however, defused the threat by retorting: “As to the annual report of the Smithsonian, I think it is entirely entitled to give an account of the expenditure of its funds. That is not my business. Nor do I want to keep the facts secret.”<sup>154</sup>

Despite the acerbic war of words that laid to rest any chance at reconciliation, neither Bishop nor the Freer ever publicly acknowledged the breakdown of negotiations. After this incident and the discontinuation of the cooperative endeavor, the Freer simply issued a statement disclosing that “Dr. Chi Li, ethnologist, who has been associated with the field staff in China for several years, resigned his position on June 30, 1930, to take up other scientific work in Peiping.”<sup>155</sup> The Smithsonian’s only allusion to the incident appeared in the *Annual Report* in a section reserved for updates on Anyang:

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<sup>152</sup> FGA, March 9, 1931.

<sup>153</sup> FGA, March 5, 1931.

<sup>154</sup> FGA, March 9, 1931.

<sup>155</sup> *Annual Report 1930*, p. 60.

As in past years, we have steadfastly adhered to our fundamental practice of conducting our expedition with due respect for both the dignity of the Institution and for the sensibilities of the Chinese, since it is our purpose, as long as we stay in the field, to serve our own immediate ends only to the extent that in doing so we serve also the ends of future archaeological research in China and help to establish an atmosphere of greater mutual regard and confidence between native and foreign scientists.<sup>156</sup>

Beyond this vague sentiment all official histories of the Smithsonian Institution and the Freer Gallery have neatly sanitized their failure in China.

Reflecting on this incident near the end of his life, Li lamented:

I had worked, from 1925 to 1930, for five continuous years with the understanding described above and in the hope that some agreement might be reached between a national institute of China with the Freer Gallery of Art of Washington, DC, to promote archaeological science as well as Sino-American friendship in academic works. This failure naturally disheartened me greatly.<sup>157</sup>

While it seems clear that Li's commitment to improving both science and international relations was more than simply rhetorical, in his personal correspondence he also made it clear that when these goals conflicted with the interests of the Chinese nation, he ultimately favored the latter. In July of 1930 the Board of Directors of the Chinese Education and Culture Foundation<sup>158</sup> ("China Foundation" in *Anyang*)<sup>159</sup> offered Li a position for delivering a series of archaeology lectures in China, effectively replacing his Freer support with Chinese funds. The resumption of Sino-American archaeological collaboration would have to wait half a century for another Harvard-trained Chinese scientist, a student of Li Chi who finally, and most delicately, once again orchestrated the union of former cold war enemies in the pursuit of China's ancient history.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> *Annual Report 1931*, p. 59.

<sup>157</sup> Li Chi, *Anyang*, 68. The statement was published just months before his death.

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<sup>159</sup> Li Chi, *Anyang*, 68.

<sup>160</sup> For more on Chang Kwang-chih, or "KC" Chang, see chapter 5.

## Nationalizing Artifacts: Pro Patria

The turning point in Li's relationship with Bishop and the Freer occurred when Chiang Kai-shek reunified China under his Republican government. A strong, centralized and internationally recognized state supported by an army meant a power finally capable of assuming the mantle of China's national heritage. Drafts of the Freer-Academia Sinica contract reflect this change, specifying that "all objects...thus discovered shall be at the disposal of the National Government of the Republic of China,"<sup>161</sup> a novel concept promulgated not by politicians but by China's scholars. Bishop had tried on several occasions to curb Li's fears of foreign predation (and probably the fears of the Academia Sinica leadership) in saying: "I hope you will emphasize in all your conversations that our object is not the acquisition of specimens but the prosecution of research."<sup>162</sup> Yet in the years following, in the Smithsonian's Annual Report, the Freer Gallery of Art listed each year's additions to the Chinese collection, including historical relics such as paintings, pottery, porcelain, jade and silver objects, and even bronzes, the very emblems of power and political authority traditionally the accoutrement of Chinese royalty. Bishop may not have fully comprehended their symbolic capital, but their significance was not lost on Li or the Chinese government.<sup>163</sup> This indiscretion coupled with those of He Rizhang and the Henan provincial museum prompted Li to join other concerned scholars

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<sup>161</sup> FGA, letter from Fu Sinian to Bishop dated February 10, 1930. See also *Anyang*, 56.

<sup>162</sup> IHP, *kao* 21-2-1, dated March 10, 1928.

<sup>163</sup> *Annual Report 1929*, p. 16 and *1930*, p. 18.

in petitioning the central government for legislation on excavation rights and artifact preservation.<sup>164</sup>

Their lobbying bore fruit on June 7, 1930, just days before Li's resignation from the Freer went into effect, when the government officially promulgated an Antiquities Protection Law, the first of its kind in China.<sup>165</sup> As with the US Antiquities Act passed twenty-four years earlier, haphazard digging and purposeful commercial looting prompted professional archaeologists and others to sponsor some legal means of safeguarding historic sites and objects. In 1906 President Theodore Roosevelt signed the first US law for the preservation of archaeological resources, establishing both a permit process for excavation by trained archaeologists and punishments for infringement.<sup>166</sup> Likewise the Chinese law also criminalized unauthorized independent excavation but went further: Article 7 allowed for state appropriation of *all* cultural relics within its borders, whether buried or unearthed, thereafter designated "national treasures";<sup>167</sup> Article 2 stipulated that the aforementioned National Antiquities Protection Committee, promulgated by and including Li Chi as a member, "was charged to preserve, research, and excavate all the ancient objects of the nation and was put directly under the Executive Yuan";<sup>168</sup> Article 6 forbade selling relics to foreigners (whether inside or outside of China); and Article 13 specified that antiquities could not pass beyond the national borders.<sup>169</sup> In essence, with this law the excavation, preservation, and exhibition

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<sup>164</sup> Li Chi, *Anyang*, 63.

<sup>165</sup> 古物保存法. Also referred to as the Law on the Preservation of Ancient Objects, it passed the Legislative Yuan on May 24, 1930. See the Chinese portion of Ignatius T. P. Pao, *Gu wu bao cun fa* (Taipei: National History Museum, 1966), 7.

<sup>166</sup> Ronald F. Lee, *Antiquities Act of 1906* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 1970).

<sup>167</sup> Pao, 19; Li Chi, *Anyang*, 63.

<sup>168</sup> Pao, 14.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

of artifacts became a national project under the sole auspices of the Chinese state, which had delegated this power to a handful of trained specialists. For Li this development proved that “scientific archaeology not only promotes verifiable knowledge, but also provides an assured means to find buried treasures and give them legal protection.”<sup>170</sup>

This original law served as a precedent for the current cultural relics laws of the People’s Republic of China, characterized as “among the most stringent and repressive in the world.”<sup>171</sup> Today, the State Bureau of Cultural Relics ensures that China’s museums “acquire huge holdings of far more relics than can ever be displayed, or even catalogued.... Many of the lesser museums are themselves more in the nature of warehouses than scientific institutions.”<sup>172</sup> But if we consider the history of Western imperialism that served as the impetus for this law, what appears to be an overprotectionist “hoarding mentality” of the Chinese simply becomes a zealous expression of cultural pride and anti-imperialism.

After passage of the National Antiquities Protection Law the state naturally granted the first official certificate for excavation to the law’s patron, Li Chi and the Academia Sinica.<sup>173</sup> In a very literal sense, Li became official curator of these national treasures, a position that consumed the remainder of his life. He turned down job offers abroad to remain in China, working at a Chinese institution with fellow Chinese scholars studying Chinese artifacts.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Li Chi, *Anyang*, 79.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>173</sup> Li Chi, *Anyang*, 63.

<sup>174</sup> Apparently Li felt some frustration and disappointment with the younger generation of scholars who did not share his commitment to building the nation, as they tended to study and then remain abroad. See Hu Songping, *Hu Shi zhi xiansheng nianpu changbian chugao* (Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1984), 3899-3901.



On July 7, 1937, shortly after the fifteenth season of the Anyang excavation, Japan invaded China initiating WWII in the Pacific theater. Li's institute moved inland from Nanjing in the eastern seaboard and throughout the war relocated a number of times, and each time Li supervised the safety of the Archaeology Section and the Anyang relics.<sup>175</sup> Li himself admitted that during the war, "in the course of moving these national treasures...there were overwhelming difficulties to overcome and inevitable losses suffered due to chaotic wartime conditions."<sup>176</sup> His protégé, Liang Siyong, was struck with tuberculosis which eventually led to his death. Reflecting on this difficult time Li later wrote: "Although like Liang, I also suffered some personal misfortunes in both Kunming and Li-chuang, I could still keep on working when there was time."<sup>177</sup> He never elaborated on these personal misfortunes, but it was in the spartan living conditions of the rugged and remote southwest that Dr. and Mrs. Li lost their two daughters.<sup>178</sup> While in the thick of these trials he confessed that the war was wearing his spirit down, yet Li never abandoned his position as academic leader and curator of the nation's antiquities, exhibiting a genuine devotion both to his nation and its heritage.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> It was also during the war that the Executive Yuan appointed Li to the Palace Museum Committee, and Ma Heng, the curator, enlisted Li's help in relocating those relics as well.

<sup>176</sup> Li Chi, *Anyang*, 121.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>178</sup> From personal interviews with Li Guangmo, Li Chi's son and only surviving child, in August 2004. Apparently the two girls, both in their teens, died of pancreatitis and typhus, which would typically have been treatable.

<sup>179</sup> IHP, *kao* 23-8.

the Archaeology Section and the Anyang relics.<sup>180</sup> Li himself admitted that during the war, “in the course of moving these national treasures...there were overwhelming difficulties to overcome and inevitable losses suffered due to chaotic wartime conditions.”<sup>181</sup> His protégé, Liang Siyong, was struck with tuberculosis which eventually led to his death. Reflecting on this difficult time Li later wrote: “Although like Liang, I also suffered some personal misfortunes in both Kunming and Li-chuang, I could still keep on working when there was time.”<sup>182</sup> He never elaborated on these personal misfortunes, but it was in the spartan living conditions of rugged and remote Yunnan that Dr. and Mrs. Li lost their two daughters.<sup>183</sup> While in the thick of these trials he confessed that the war was wearing his spirit down,<sup>184</sup> yet Li never abandoned his position as academic leader and curator of the nation’s antiquities, exhibiting a genuine devotion both to his nation and its heritage.

War’s end brought only brief respite for Li and the Anyang treasures, and soon the rivalry between Chiang’s Nationalist government and the communists erupted into full blown civil war. The conflict became a rout, and when Chiang’s government began the retreat to Taiwan in 1948 Li assisted in the transfer of some 3,000 crates of national relics across the strait, even personally supervising the shipment of Anyang artifacts.<sup>185</sup>

Due to the cold war that followed, Li never had opportunity to return to the mainland and

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<sup>180</sup> The National Central Museum, with Li Chi as head, participated in the Anyang excavation and the relics thus uncovered then belonged permanently to the museum (Li Chi, *Anyang*, 79). Throughout the war he remained their steward and oversaw their relocation as part of the 3,000 crates of national treasures later shipped to Taiwan. It was also during the war that the Executive Yuan appointed Li to the Palace Museum Committee, and Ma Heng, the curator, enlisted Li’s help in relocating those relics as well. See IHP *kao* 19-2-5, 19-2-9, and 19-2-12.

<sup>181</sup> Li Chi, *Anyang*, 121.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>183</sup> Personal communication with Li Guangmo, Li Chi’s son, Beijing August 2004.

<sup>184</sup> IHP *kao* 23-8.

<sup>185</sup> Li Chi was selected to oversee the shipment of Anyang items and to assist Xu Shenyu, who was to direct the transfer of the Palace Museum collections to Taiwan. Because Xu stayed in the mainland, Li ended up fulfilling both duties. See Li Chi, *Anyang*, 141.

so never did again excavate at Anyang. Instead he characteristically devoted the rest of his life to studying the relics, publishing, and teaching at Chinese institutions.

### **Constructing Museums and Memory: The Shang Dynasty as National Heritage**

Each party contending for some stake in Anyang perceived the value of the Shang relics differently. He Rizhang viewed Shang civilization as part of Henan history and consequently claimed Shang remains as provincial property, initially refusing the central government or the nation any rights to Anyang and her treasures.<sup>186</sup> After the retreat of the Nationalist government to Taiwan, the communist PRC regime had access to the Anyang site and conducted its own excavations using Shang remains to substantiate Marxist theory.<sup>187</sup> Likewise the Freer Gallery served not as a repository of national relics but *international* relics—Li considered the Freer’s collection of Asian art and antiquities a symbol of US global domination and imperialism akin to mummies in the Louvre or Elgin Marbles in the British Museum. While Bishop and the Freer staff saw Anyang as an international endeavor, the Chinese clearly viewed Anyang as a *national* affair. Unlike imperialist museums, in nationalist museums artifacts assist the state in disseminating to citizens what Benedict Anderson calls an official “biography of the nation.”<sup>188</sup> While Li Chi’s prolific reports on Anyang certainly constitute part of this biography, Li tended to write in Chinese for an erudite Chinese audience. Museums, however, “often have many

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<sup>186</sup> Ironically the contents of the Henan Provincial Museum were also shipped to Taiwan by the Nationalist government, where they now constitute the National History Museum collection, which bills itself as a rival to the Palace Museum.

<sup>187</sup> See Lothar von Falkenhausen, “On the Historiographical Orientation of Chinese Archaeology,” *Antiquity* 67 (1993): 839-49.

<sup>188</sup> See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), 204-6.

more normative effects on their visitors than all of the great books that go unread by the same people.”<sup>189</sup> For Li, the museum became a means of popularizing the national narrative, thus instilling national consciousness in his compatriots in a way that erudite scholarship could not.<sup>190</sup> As a matter of course, then, after unearthing a vast trove of ancient treasures the museum became Li’s means of safeguarding the patrimony and serving the nation.

In fact Li was well equipped to pioneer museology in China. Just months before the commencement of digging at Anyang Li visited the Smithsonian, the British Museum, the Louvre, the Indian Museum, and many other museums across Europe and the Middle East to analyze their exhibits.<sup>191</sup> Following the first season of excavation he accepted an appointment to help create a History Museum,<sup>192</sup> and later the central government commissioned him to establish a National Central Museum much like the Smithsonian in the US.<sup>193</sup> Initially Li was designated head of the museum’s Humanity Section<sup>194</sup> (the other two sections being Nature and Handicrafts) while Fu Sinian chaired the preparatory committee, but in July of 1934 Li took over as museum chairman. It had a great hall built in Nanjing, China’s new capital, to house the Anyang finds and commemorate the Shang dynasty as heritage of the modern Chinese nation.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> For more detailed works on the relationship between objects and national identity see Virginia R. Dominguez, “Visual Nationalism: On Looking at ‘National Symbols,’” *Public Culture* 5 (1993): 451-455. See also Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>191</sup> This was done at the expense of the Freer Gallery and after Li’s resignation became a bone of contention.

<sup>192</sup> 歷史博物館. See IHP *kao* 31-2-2.

<sup>193</sup> 國立中央博物院.

<sup>194</sup> 人文館.

<sup>195</sup> This building, designed by Liang Sicheng (son of Liang Qichao and half-brother of Liang Siyong), became headquarters for the Japanese military during occupation but by then Li had already supervised the

It has been noted that museums serve as mnemonic media—a means of forging and reinforcing collective memory and of standardizing identity through shared social experience.<sup>196</sup> As sites of ritualized reflection and public instruction, museums promote collective imagination and facilitate modern mass mobilization.<sup>197</sup> Unlike earlier private or imperial collections, or even China’s “semi-private” first museum with its select group of patrons,<sup>198</sup> the Nationalist government’s *national* museums were to transform imperial subjects into national citizens.<sup>199</sup> Li played a key part in this “museumification” of China,<sup>200</sup> explaining that now “all finds are to be used publicly for citizens.”<sup>201</sup> In the book *Museum*, written for the Ministry of Education, Li reiterated that museum exhibitions are made for “educating the masses” and the “common people,”<sup>202</sup> further underscoring this philosophy by providing strategies for attracting patrons. He suggested that exhibits be easily understood by all, with special allowances made for targeting children and youth. He also showed a shrewd awareness of the political power of museums when he explained that “the greatest purpose of a museum is to supplement education,” and “education is a step in establishing administration.”<sup>203</sup>

Although most articles unearthed by Li and his team at Anyang sit today in the IHP History Museum, Shang objects are found in museums the world over where

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removal of its contents. Today the building houses the Nanjing Museum, which during the Mao period was curated by Zheng Zhaoyue, a favorite student of Li Chi.

<sup>196</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, “On Collective Memory” in Lewis A. Coser, ed. *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 23-4.

<sup>197</sup> Timothy W. Luke, *Museum Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), introduction.

<sup>198</sup> Lisa Claypool, “Zhang Jian and China’s First Museum,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 64, no. 3 (Aug. 2005): 576, 577.

<sup>199</sup> See for instance Tamara Hamlsh, “Preserving the Palace: Museums and the Making of Nationalisms in Twentieth-Century China,” *Museum Anthropology* 19, no. 2 (1995): 20-30.

<sup>200</sup> Rubie Watson, “Palaces, Museums, and Squares: Chinese National Spaces,” *Museum Anthropology* 19, no. 2 (1995): 7-19.

<sup>201</sup> IHP, *yuan* 141-2b.

<sup>202</sup> 大眾 and 一般人. See Li Chi, *Bowuguan* (Jiao yu bu she hui jiao yu si, 1943), 69.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

displays assume ethnic and cultural continuity from the Shang dynasty to the present, making the Shang people the biological and cultural ancestors of modern Chinese. This idea derives directly from Li Chi, who half a century ago insisted that “Chinese civilization [i]s represented by these remains.”<sup>204</sup> According to Li, the Shang introduced a novel architectural technique utilizing pisé, or stamped earth, “a method that is still extensively employed in all parts of China.”<sup>205</sup> One bronze item “is undoubtedly the forerunner of the frying pan used by every Chinese housewife.”<sup>206</sup> Through Li’s work, Shang remains became emblems of *Chinese* civilization—Shang society was not simply *part of* the Bronze Age in China, it *was* the Bronze Age of China, the earliest dynasty in a linear progression to the modern nation and the shared heritage of every Chinese person. For this reason it became imperative that the Chinese state, rather than the Freer or any other entity, secure and retain authority to interpret the finds, to rewrite Chinese history, and to appropriate Shang civilization in order to incorporate it into the evolving narrative of the Chinese nation.

### **Defining Chinese**

But Li Chi and his peers of the May Fourth generation adopted a very narrow, exclusive definition of “Chinese” forged earlier by Sun Yat-sen and the revolutionaries; for them, Chinese simply meant Han. As mentioned earlier, anthropology in China grew out of the established dichotomy of Han and barbarian—just as Cai Yuanpei oriented ethnology toward China’s internal others, advocating travel to the feral and remote

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<sup>204</sup> Li Chi, *The Beginnings of Chinese Civilization*, 19.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-4.

borderlands to study non-Han minorities (a narrative taken up in the chapter following), Li and archaeologists focused on China's heartland in the Central Plains to seek out the roots of the Chinese "race" and civilization. His success at Anyang and his indomitable search for Han origins set the future course of archaeology and subsequent views of China's past.<sup>207</sup> In training an entire generation of archaeologists including future leaders like Xia Nai, Guo Baojun, and KC Chang, he ensured that his vision of China would not fade quickly.

Whereas revolutionaries had earlier coupled literate civilization with the Han, the new science of archaeology enabled the search for continuity to move beyond textual histories into material remains. Therefore when Li and the state appropriated and mobilized vestiges of the Shang for a national narrative it was to compose the biography of the Han; contemporary minorities could only claim connections to the barbarians who surrounded Shang civilization. It is no coincidence that Anyang lies in the valley of the Yellow River—just as the Central Plains represented the geographical heart of China, so Han remained the human focus of Li's work. His excavation at Anyang not only established the Shang as Han progenitors, it also allowed elites to push Han origins backward into prehistoric times, to the Yangshao and Longshan civilizations<sup>208</sup> and even to Peking Man, a development discussed in detail in chapter three.<sup>209</sup> This discrete, linear descent group constituted what Li called the "Chinese race," beginning with native hominids that evolved in the Central Plains to become China's great civilization. The

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<sup>207</sup> For details on Li's mentorship see Clayton D. Brown, "Li Ji: The Father of Chinese Archaeology," *Orientalism* 39:3 (April 2008): 61-66.

<sup>208</sup> According to Li, the Hougang mound showed a "stratified series of the painted pottery, black pottery, and the Anyang culture deposits laid down in definite sequence." See *Anyang*, 71.

<sup>209</sup> For Li the "shovel-shaped incisor" was a trait shared by Peking Man, "proto-Chinese," historical and modern Chinese (see Li Chi, *The Beginnings of Chinese Civilization*, 5-11). See also chapter three for a detailed discussion of Li's ideas on Peking Man and chapter four for a comparison with how the PRC appropriated the prehistoric.

advent of archaeology thus replaced the popular but questionable belief in a Yellow Emperor as Han progenitor with more scientifically plausible, but no less nationalistic, origins.



## ETHNOLOGY: FRONTIER STUDIES AND CHINA'S OTHER, 1926-1945

While Chinese archaeologists trace the origins of their trade as far back as the antiquarian tradition of the Song dynasty, Chinese ethnology supposedly began even earlier, with the classical textual tradition. This literature furnished accounts (some fanciful) of peoples outside the Central Plain, taking especial care to describe their eccentric, and sometimes outrageous, barbarian customs.<sup>210</sup> Ethnologists today still recognize the *Shanhaijing*, or *Classic of Mountains and Seas*,<sup>211</sup> as “the oldest volume on ethno-geography of the ancient Celestial Empire” and a prototypical account of peoples beyond the reach of civilization.<sup>212</sup> Although the authors and precise date of the text remain uncertain, this work and others like it served as proto-ethnographies, perpetuating the idea of a civilized core and barbarian periphery.

In the twentieth century, while archaeologists like Li Chi focused on the roots of Han civilization in the Central Plain, ethnologists traversed the frontier to study China's contemporary Other. It has been noted that the imperial court had earlier sponsored ethnographic and cartographic surveys of the frontier as a means of facilitating administration. The state's purpose in gathering such information about the border lands and peoples was “precisely and unabashedly to learn about, or rather construct, the identity of those to be ruled. Such knowledge simplifies the task of governance.”<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Cai Yuanpei, *Cai Yuanpei minzuxue lunzhu* (Taipei: Taiwan zhonghua shuju, 1962), 5-6.

<sup>211</sup> 山海經.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 13. Cai himself considered this a seminal contribution to Chinese ethnology. See also Cai Yuanpei, “Shuo Minzuxue” *Yiban* 1, no. 4 (1926).

<sup>213</sup> Laura Hostetler, “Qing Connections to the Early Modern World: Ethnography and Cartography in Eighteenth-Century China,” *Modern Asian Studies* 34, no. 3 (2000): 650.

Despite the dissolution of the civil service examinations and even the imperial system itself, the twentieth century saw a new breed of literati who enjoyed state sponsorship but, unlike their predecessors, came armed with scientific methodology, Western epistemological links, and a nationalist agenda.

### **Cai Yuanpei: Politics and Ethnology**

Cai Yuanpei has been called the Gottfried W. Leibnitz of China—a gifted polymath of broad education and interests who pioneered multiple disciplines even as he guided state policy.<sup>214</sup> With this combination of education and political authority, Cai certainly epitomizes the ideal Confucian scholar. A prodigy of China’s classical education system, he climbed the ranks of the imperial civil service by passing the county level examination at age seventeen, the provincial examination at twenty-three, and the highest degree, the *jinshi*, at the extraordinarily young age of twenty-six.<sup>215</sup> He then acceded to the prestigious Hanlin Academy, a select group of China’s foremost literati who oversaw the examination system and served as an advisory council to the court.<sup>216</sup> Ironically, despite his coveted position within the imperial bureaucracy, within a few years Cai would become an anti-Qing radical and revolutionary.

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<sup>214</sup> He Liangui, “Cai Jiemin xiansheng duiyu minzuxue zhi gongxian” *Minzuxue yanjiusuo jikan* no. 9 (1960): 10.

<sup>215</sup> The imperial bureaucracy consisted of three main degrees: the *shengyuan* 生員 or *xiuca* 秀才 for those who passed the county level examination; the *juren* 舉人 for those who passed the provincial examination; and the *jinshi* 進士 for those few who passed the rigorous imperial examination in the capital. These last were the highest ranking civil service officials charged with the task of administering the empire through the *juren* and *shengyuan* degree holders. See Ichisada Miyazaki, *China's Examination Hell: The Civil Service Examinations of Imperial China* (New York: Weatherhill, 1981).

<sup>216</sup> See a recent publication of Cai’s memoirs: Cai Yuanpei, *Jiemin zishu* (Nanjing: Jianxi renmin chubanshe, 1999), 6-11.

The turn occurred in 1898, when certain of his fellow literati, led by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, prevailed on the young Guangxu emperor to enact what became the Hundred Days Reform, a plan to modernize China by adopting a constitution and other political changes. When the Dowager Empress and her clique staged a coup d'état, nipping any hope at reform in the bud, she brought to a head gathering tensions between loyalty to the state and loyalty to the nation, a dilemma that recurs throughout this chapter: while the state was increasingly viewed as an alien dynasty bereft of any mandate, the nation, thanks largely to Sun Yat-sen, centered on an imagined Han identity. The abortive Hundred Days Reform pushed Cai from the reformist camp into that of the revolutionaries. Had Cai viewed the Qing as representing the nation it is unlikely that he would have turned on the regime, but only in betraying the state could he remain loyal to the nation.

Although he too had originally supported the reformers, by 1894 Sun had already grown dissatisfied with the Qing and all reform efforts and had formed a secret society based in Hawaii known as the Xingzhonghui, or Revive China Society,<sup>217</sup> whose members took an oath to “expel the foreigners, revive China, and establish a government that unifies the people.”<sup>218</sup> Sun’s organization is considered the first modern revolutionary society in China, but others soon appeared. In 1903 Huang Xing established the Huaxinghui,<sup>219</sup> also committed to overturning the Qing and restoring China, and in November of 1904 Cai Yuanpei established his Guangfuhui, or “Restoration Society,” yet another clandestine organization dedicated to overthrowing the

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<sup>217</sup> 興中會

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<sup>219</sup> 華興會

Manchu dynasty and re-establishing Han rule but based in Shanghai.<sup>220</sup> In an effort to unite all these disparate revolutionary groups, the following year in Tokyo Sun Yat-sen founded the broad-based Tongmenghui, or Revolutionary Alliance,<sup>221</sup> and appointed Cai director of the Alliance's Shanghai branch.<sup>222</sup> Already a well-known scholar and bureaucrat, Cai now became an early and high profile revolutionary allied with Sun Yat-sen.

That same year, in 1905, the court discontinued the civil service examinations as part of its belated reformation policy and the following year arranged to sponsor scholars on a mission to study abroad. Having learned German for years, Cai, at the age of forty, embarked on a four year stint in Germany pursuing a broad, interdisciplinary Western education initially in Berlin and later at the Universität Leipzig. It was at the latter campus that Cai first encountered an ethnology museum and attended lectures on the discipline, even becoming acquainted with the German ethnologist T.W. Danzel.<sup>223</sup> This was Cai's first encounter with the field he would later pioneer and institutionalize in China.

When Cai received word of the Xinhai Revolution, he immediately left Germany and returned to China, arriving November of 1911 to find both the dynasty and the imperial system at an end and the Hanlin Academy closed after twelve hundred years in operation. But Cai's talents and connections did not leave him long unemployed—as a founding member of Sun Yat-sen's Nationalist Party and with demonstrated interest and experience in education, Sun, as provisional President of the Republic of China,

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<sup>220</sup> 光復會

<sup>221</sup> 同盟會

<sup>222</sup> Cai, *Jiemin zishu*, 43-47.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-55.

appointed Cai as first Minister of Education. As Minister, Cai revolutionized China's education system, shifting the curriculum away from the Confucian classics toward more modern and Western-derived disciplines, most notably the natural and social sciences. Within weeks of Sun's accession, however, the Qing general Yuan Shikai assumed the presidency. Once again feeling that the government had failed the nation, Cai soon resigned his position and returned to Europe to continue his mission to strengthen the nation through modern education.

In both France and Germany Cai had an opportunity to engage in broad study of a number of subjects, including ethnology.<sup>224</sup> Four years later, following Yuan's death in 1916, Cai returned to China to accept an appointment as Chancellor of Peking University. In this capacity he shifted the university focus from its historical role of training government officials to promoting independent modern scholarship. As part of this new policy he reshuffled faculty and recruited to his institution those who would become stars in the New Culture Movement, including Hu Shi and future CCP founder Chen Duxiu. As part of his policy advocating apolitical intellectual freedom, during the infamous May Fourth episode he supported students (including protest leader Fu Sinian) in their strike against the government and made the school an open forum for debate and political change.<sup>225</sup> What is less generally known but pertinent here is that while serving as Chancellor, Cai also began teaching China's first ethnology courses while using

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<sup>224</sup> He, 5.

<sup>225</sup> For an English language account of the May Fourth Movement and Fu's experiences see Wang Fansen, *Fu Ssu-nien: A Life in Chinese History and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Cai's account can be found in Cai, 134-146.

ethnological theories and materials in his lectures on the fine arts, thus working ethnology into Peking University's curriculum.<sup>226</sup>

Just days after the protests Cai decided to resign his position as Chancellor due to, in his words, a lack of political freedom;<sup>227</sup> Cai was in fact incensed at the forced closure of campus and unjustified arrest of students. Soon afterward the government sent him to America and Europe to survey higher education in the West and then, in 1924, when Cai took up residence in Europe for a third and final time, the Ministry of Education dispatched him to attend an ethnology conference on Native Americans. According to his memoirs, this experience deepened his interest in ethnology and prompted him to pursue research in that field.<sup>228</sup> At this conference he again met Professor Danzel, who convinced Cai join him at the University of Hamburg where Cai devoted an entire year exclusively to the study of ethnology. In his memoirs Cai suggests that this marks a turning point in his intellectual life, explaining that in his forties he specialized in the study of aesthetics and fine arts while in his fifties he turned to ethnology.<sup>229</sup> In 1926, shortly after returning to China, Cai published "A Discussion of Ethnology," China's first treatise on the subject.<sup>230</sup>

In this important article Cai systematically introduced the discipline, providing a historical overview of its development in both Chinese tradition and in Western social science and explicating its relationship to other fields such as raceology, archaeology, geography, history, sociology, psychology, etc. He defined and etymologized key

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<sup>226</sup> He, 5.

<sup>227</sup> Cai, *Jiemin zishu*, 167.

<sup>228</sup> Cai, *Jiemin zishu* 64-65. See also Cai Yuanpei, "Minzuxueshang zhi jinhuaguan" in *Cai Yuanpei xueshu wenhua suibi* (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1996), 87.

<sup>229</sup> Cai, *Jiemin zishu* 11-12.

<sup>230</sup> Cai Yuanpei, "Shuo Minzuxue" *Yiban* 1, no. 4 (1926).

Western terms and his translations now constitute the language of Chinese ethnology.<sup>231</sup> He even suggested uniting ethnology and archaeology, suggesting that the methods of the two could complement one another, thus broaching the field of ethnoarchaeology.<sup>232</sup> According to Cai: “The materials acquired through archaeology are all concrete; for instance, the bones of man and beast as well as other types of objects. Only in using the information acquired through ethnology to confirm [archaeological findings] can we understand the precise usage [of these objects]. Through this [comparative method] we can understand both the ancestors of modern civilization, and also contemporary barbarians.”<sup>233</sup> In other words, because minorities and Han ancestors share a material culture, ethnological analysis of modern barbarians helps us understand the primitive ancestors of the Han. Thus, for Cai, Han represented the vanguard of social evolution.

While Cai did not engage in fieldwork himself, he fervently advocated “on-the-spot investigation,” a novel concept largely derived from Western scientific empiricism. Although in his recitation of Chinese historiography Cai cited the *Shanhaijing* as China’s ethnographic prototype, he explained that none of China’s venerable texts constitutes what one would consider a “scientific record.” Instead, he emphasized the need to transcend traditional reliance on text by using one’s own senses to understand different

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<sup>231</sup> By this time a number of terms were in use, including *renleixue*, *renzhongxue*, and *minzuxue*, and although Cai’s article distinguished between them, his training in Germany led him to favor ethnology or *minzuxue*. Historically the term anthropology, or *renleixue*, has been more prominent in the south, including Zhongshan and Xiamen Universities and in Taiwan, while ethnology remains favored in northern institutions. Recently, however, CASS Institute of Ethnology added the term anthropology to its title, making it the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology. Although Cai differentiated “ethnography” 記錄的民族學 from “ethnology” 比較的民族學, these terms are seldom used today; instead they are simply rendered 民族志 and 民族學.

<sup>232</sup> The term and field of 民族考古學 would develop later. For an introduction to the ethnoarchaeology in China see Rong Guanqiong and Qiao Xiaoqin, *Minzukaoguxue chulun* (Nanning: Guangxi chubanshe, 1992).

<sup>233</sup> I translate Cai’s 野蠻人 as simply “barbarians”; some alteration of Cai’s original punctuation was necessary to make the English version of this passage more natural.

racés and cultures.<sup>234</sup> He explained that facts come from actual observance, a principle that differentiates present studies from those previous.<sup>235</sup> In “A Discussion of Ethnology,” Cai noted that ethnologists utilize personal connections to “deeply penetrate natural ethnic tribes, experience extremely bitter travels, risk great dangers and, following this, often sacrifice even one’s life to achieve the worthy goal of obtaining a detailed and true report.”<sup>236</sup> In recording ethnographic fieldwork he advocated the use of interpreters and cameras as well as specialized training, since “without studying their languages, knowing their customs, or having intimate contact, there is no spying out the real situation.”<sup>237</sup>

But as Cai himself pointed out, modern ethnology differs from classical literary accounts of the Other in both method *and* purpose. According to Cai, ethnographies not only possess intellectual value, but practical value as well—as one biographer put it, Cai believed that ethnology can perform “many useful political functions.”<sup>238</sup> Indeed, in his seminal article, Cai noted that “relying on government funds, [ethnologists] establish exploratory parties and conduct large-scale purchases and explorations.”<sup>239</sup> Despite his sincere and admittedly influential pursuit of an ideal academe divorced from politics, when Cai institutionalized ethnology two years after the publication of his article, economic realities ensured that it became a state endeavor. Even so, there was not always agreement about how to best serve the national interest.

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<sup>234</sup> He Liankui, ed., *Cai Yuanpei minzuxue lunzhu* (Taipei: Taiwan zhonghua shuju, 1967), introduction 17.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>236</sup> From Cai Yuanpei, “Shuo minzuxue” as reprinted in He, 3-4.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 4. Cai used the term 窺 which I render as “spy.”

<sup>238</sup> He, pg. 17 of the introduction.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.



Having observed exhibits of the material culture of colonized peoples in European museums and listened to lectures on the cultures of colonial African tribes, Cai purposefully set ethnology to the task of studying and defining the accessible Other—the non-Han minorities of China’s frontier. Although by the time Cai penned this article ethnology had become externally oriented and largely associated with the colonies of Western powers, he noted that in Europe ethnology had originally served to study each nation’s own peoples—those ethnic groups within the state borders. This was certainly true of ethnology in the United States, with its early focus on minorities of the homeland. The Bureau of American Ethnology, under the aegis of the Smithsonian Institution, included several ethnologists and an archaeologist who took as their primary subject the study of Native Americans.<sup>240</sup> Similarly, Cai set Chinese ethnology to the task of studying China’s non-Han minorities concentrated in the national periphery. Although Cai advocated the independence of academics from politics, even playing a significant role in revolutionizing China’s education system, national education necessarily depended on state funding. in Hostetler’s Machiavellian terms, to construct their identities for the purpose of administration.

Scholars today consider Cai the father of Chinese ethnology due in part to his pioneering article but, more importantly, because he personally institutionalized the discipline in China.<sup>241</sup> In October 1927 Chiang Kaishek appointed Cai head of the Academic Yuan<sup>242</sup> which, following the French model, would serve as the highest organ

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<sup>240</sup> See the front matter in the early Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>241</sup> Cai wrote further on the subject of ethnology in “Shehuixue yu minzuxue” 1930, and “Minzuxueshang zhi jinhuaguan” 1934. See reprints in Cai, *Cai Yuanpei xueshu wenhua suibi*, 1996.

<sup>242</sup> 大學院

of education policy in the state.<sup>243</sup> According to Cai's vision, the Academic Yuan would encompass two sections: a National Central Research Institute, or Academia Sinica, to oversee research; and a National Central University to preside over all universities, with university presidents in turn directing education policy in their district. Thus primary, secondary, and tertiary education as well as research would all come under the aegis of the central government. But when the government re-established a Ministry of Education and appointed a new Education Minister the following year, the Ministry assumed responsibility for all teaching institutions including the National Central University.<sup>244</sup> Cai's short-lived Academic Yuan quickly dissolved, but the Academia Sinica, as a special bureau under the Central Government's Executive Yuan, remained in place to guide research and advise on matters of state policy.<sup>245</sup>

As mentioned in chapter one, Cai recruited to the Academia Sinica trained pioneers in the sciences like Li Chi, scholars who represented their respective discipline and presided over its development in China. Earlier Cai had intended to establish an Ethnology Institute complete with museum, but lack of trained personnel and funds forced him to scale back his plans. Instead, within the Academia Sinica's Social Science Institute, he created an Ethnology Section<sup>246</sup> and served concurrently as both president of

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<sup>243</sup> Although relations between Chiang and Cai would later deteriorate, in 1927 Cai was not only the dean of academics under the Guomindang but in December he presided over Chiang's wedding to Song Meiling, an indication of their amiable relationship at that time. Recounted in Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: WW Norton, 1990), 362.

<sup>244</sup> As the name implies, the National Central University 國立中央大學 served as the state's foremost or model university until 1949, when the new communist government renamed it Nanjing University. The history of Nanjing University is exceedingly complex, with the school itself tracing its origins back to AD 258. Here I focus only on its incarnation as the National Central University.

<sup>245</sup> Cai, *Jiemin zishu*, 177-178.

<sup>246</sup> Within the Social Science Institute 社會科學研究所 Cai created four sections: Law, Economics, Sociology, and Ethnology, all numbered in that order so that the Ethnology Section 民族組 was also called the Fourth Section (much like within IHP the Third Section was the Archaeology Section). See Cai p. 157 for a description of the original Social Science Institute.

the Academia Sinica and director of the Ethnology Section.<sup>247</sup> Although in the following year he relinquished the latter position, he continued to preside over the development of ethnology by recruiting researchers and sponsoring fieldwork.<sup>248</sup>

### **Academia Sinica in the Field**

This fieldwork began even before the formal founding of the Academia Sinica. In summer of 1928 Fu Sinian, then head of the preparatory office of the Institute of History and Philology of the Academic Yuan (later the Academia Sinica), ordered an expedition to western Sichuan, then known as Chuankang,<sup>249</sup> to explore this remote frontier and gather data on the natives. The team was to be led by Wang Yuanhui and Li Guangming, both originally from Sichuan province.<sup>250</sup> Wang had recently graduated from the Whampoa (Huangpu) Military Academy<sup>251</sup> where he served as a propaganda officer, while Li, as a Muslim, had been rejected by the Academy and so had just graduated from Zhongshan University instead. Whampoa, the Soviet-style Military Academy run by Chiang Kai-shek since his appointment by Sun Yat-sen in 1924, served as a training ground for officers in the Guomindang army. In the course of their instruction, which included heavy doses of political indoctrination, these cadets became fiercely loyal to

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<sup>247</sup> He Liankui, 16-17.

<sup>248</sup> An overview of this is found in Gregory Guldin, *The Saga of Anthropology in China* (Armonk: ME Sharpe, 1994), 32.

<sup>249</sup> 川康, abbreviation of Sichuan and Kangding.

<sup>250</sup> Until recently this seminal expedition was ignored by scholars, most astonishingly in Gregory Guldin's *Saga of Anthropology in China*, which makes no mention of it whatsoever. However, in recent years, Wang Ming-ke has produced a number of studies on this topic and increasing interest has led to acknowledgment of its historical significance. The final report to IHP, titled *Chuankang minsu diaocha baogao*, was not published until 2004 as Li Guangming and Wang Yuanhui, *Chuanxi minsu diaocha jilu 1929* (Taipei: Academia Sinica Institute of History and Philology, 2004). For a discussion of its significance, see Wang Ming-ke, "Wasi tusi de zuyuan: Yige dui lishi, shenhua yu xiangye chuanshuo de bianyuan yanjiu," *Lishi renleixue xuekan* 2.1 (1994).

<sup>251</sup> , or .

their commandant.<sup>252</sup> Graduates became Chiang's elite force in his subsequent struggles with warlords and communists, working to assert his power over all China—even, apparently, in the hinterland.

Although they labeled their mission a “folklore investigation,” Li's formal research proposal made it clear that the principal object of study was not the Han but minorities.<sup>253</sup> They intended to use Chengdu as a base as they ventured into the surrounding mountains to study the ManYi, a general term for barbarians adopted from Sima Qian's *Records of the Grand Historian*.<sup>254</sup> At one point Li even mentioned the value of recording the difficult life of the “common people” as they traveled, but Fu Sinian made it clear in his commentary that the plight of the common people does not fall under the purview of the Institute.<sup>255</sup> Although they did plan to gather some information on urbanites, this was to be left to subordinates while they would personally conduct research in the remoter areas.<sup>256</sup>

Echoing Cai's earlier call to ethnologists to brave all hardships for the sake of a “true report,” they planned to take treacherous paths, passing through territory inhabited by “nothing but wild beasts and thorny weeds; those who live there are all called ‘raw barbarians,’<sup>257</sup> their numbers are particularly few and they have very little contact with

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<sup>252</sup> Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: WW Norton, 1990), 339.

<sup>253</sup> IHP 元 115-20-1. Although the final report has been published (see below), this original proposal remains unpublished.

<sup>254</sup> 蠻夷 as a phrase combined the even older terms Eastern Yi 東夷 and Southern Man 南蠻, ancient ethnonyms indicating the location of barbarian groups vis-à-vis the civilized center. While it was believed that the five races—Han, Man, Meng, Zang, Hui—were recognizable and sharply differentiated, many groups did not fit neatly into any of these categories.

<sup>255</sup> IHP 元 115-20-1, p. 1.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>257</sup> The phrase 生番, meaning “raw barbarians,” is a term used by the Han indicating the least civilized barbarians—those farthest from the influence of the Son of Heaven—and is obviously not self-referential. See Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 8-9.

the Han. But to achieve the purpose of the investigation, and to satisfy our deep interest, we must fearlessly go despite all dangers and difficulties.”<sup>258</sup> In dramatic flare, Li concludes that “...in taking all these paths that no one travels, although we are persistent and determined to get there, I don’t know whether we will be able to reach our objective.”<sup>259</sup>

Li explained that the party would refrain from frequent visits along the way in order to avoid the suspicion that their work will be used for military or political purposes, but once outside (presumably beyond the metropole) they planned to “make a detailed record of suitable research concerning finances, the salt industry, and currency, as well as military and political matters, in order to identify the cause of recent riots and to know where to send relief.”<sup>260</sup> Although they acknowledged that the Tibetans were the direct reason for these uprisings, they also accused the British of inciting unrest and therefore vowed to pay particularly close attention to these international events.<sup>261</sup> Just as Cai had advocated that ethnology serve both an intellectual and political purpose, Li hoped that their record would serve “as a reference for those who will govern Sichuan in the future.”<sup>262</sup>

But although the team intended to track politically relevant information on their travels, “popular customs are not less important than the antics of warlords and politicians; therefore, besides noting military and political affairs, we especially emphasize social culture—all popular customs, folksongs, proverbs, etc.”<sup>263</sup> In the

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<sup>258</sup> IHP 元 115-20-1, p. 2-3.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 6.

opening paragraphs of the proposal, Li made it clear that the overall purpose of the expedition was to investigate the “setting, customs, temperament, attire, residence, occupation, language, and economy of the Luoluo and other barbarians,” and determine how these tribes should be categorized—their “zhongshu,” a term referring to the Linnaean taxonomic system used to classify biological organisms according to phylum, class, genus, species, etc.<sup>264</sup> Just as Cai had suggested that the government should provide funds to explore and make purchases, Li explained that in order to capture the lives of their subjects they intended to take pictures and, “for those things that are not easily viewed but possess reference value, to buy it for a price.”<sup>265</sup> Li also planned to make the results available to the masses in Chengdu. He explained that “in order to capture the attention of society, we will arrange for a famous newspaper to reserve a column for us to openly publicize, and go to every school and lecture freely...”<sup>266</sup>

Most importantly, however, they intended to investigate historical change and “how this influences the current political situation, with special regard for how to cultivate the land and civilize the people.”<sup>267</sup> This, in fact, appears to be the driving force behind the expedition—to develop and integrate the periphery. While the exclusivity of Han ethnocentrism served the revolutionary cause decades earlier by alienating the Manchu regime, by this time the policy of *wuzu gonghe*, or uniting the five races, was actively extended to the undefined peripheral peoples of China’s remote southwest.

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<sup>264</sup> The proposal explicitly states that the researchers wish to study the *zhongshu* 種屬, or classification, of these “barbarians” 番夷. The phrase *zhongshu* infers a scientific taxonomy and is often associated with the Linnean system for classifying biological organisms.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>267</sup> IHP 元 115-20-1, p. 4-5. “Cultivate” actually appears as 懇殖, which could be rendered “colonize” but it seems the characters were likely miswritten. “Civilize” appears in the original as 開化.

## **Ling Chunsheng and Assimilation: 去種界同中華**

Although Cai Yuanpei deservedly receives credit for introducing and institutionalizing ethnology in China,<sup>268</sup> Cai was a theorist and administrator, not a field worker. Therefore in 1928, with establishment of his Ethnology Section, Cai began dispatching researchers into the periphery to conduct pioneering ethnological fieldwork.<sup>269</sup> Like Wang Yuanhui and Li Guangming of the IHP expedition to Chuankang, however, these fieldworkers too lacked formal training.<sup>270</sup> China's first bona fide ethnologist was Ling Chunsheng, a student of Marcel Mauss and Marcel Granet who, in 1929, received his doctorate from the University of Paris for a dissertation on the Yao.<sup>271</sup> Cai Yuanpei, who for years had dedicated himself to establishing the discipline in China and possessed a special interest in its future development, deferred to Ling by inviting the younger scholar to replace him as head of the Ethnology Section.<sup>272</sup> Cai retained his position as president of the Academia Sinica, however, which allowed him to continue his supervisory role.

In fact, in 1930, shortly after Ling Chunsheng assumed his new post, Cai encouraged Ling to undertake a study of the Tungusic Hezhe people in the northeast area formerly called Manchuria. Ling's expedition is now hailed as "the first scientific field investigation in Chinese ethnology" and a historically important milestone in its

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<sup>268</sup> As Guldin points out, this would include social or cultural anthropology. See Guldin, 30-31.

<sup>269</sup> Guldin, 32.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 52. Yang Chengzhi's extended stay among the Yi is recognized by some as China's very first fieldwork, but like Wang Yuanhui and Li Guangming who undertook the contemporary IHP Chuankang expedition, Yang had not yet undergone formal ethnological training.

<sup>271</sup> Li Yiyuan, "Ling Chunsheng xiansheng dui Zhongguo minzuxue zhi gongxian," *Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology* 29 (1970): 1

<sup>272</sup> Even so, Ling recognized Cai's preeminent position in the history of Chinese ethnology. See IHP 李 13-4-27.

subsequent development.<sup>273</sup> In 1934 the Academia Sinica Institute of History and Philology published *Songhuajiang xiayou de Hezhezu* based on this fieldwork.<sup>274</sup> According Li Yih-yuan (Li Yiyuan), one of Ling’s former students and successor as head of the Institute of Ethnology, this lengthy multi-volume work “became the first Chinese scientific ethnography.”<sup>275</sup> More importantly, like Li Chi’s work in archaeology, Ling’s ethnography represented the highest caliber of scholarship which for the next decade served as the model for fieldwork and reporting on the periphery.

Ling’s work indeed set many important precedents,<sup>276</sup> but one in particular characterizes his approach generally. In this and later studies, he (and his assistant, Rui Yifu) relied on the historical records in constructing (or reconstructing, depending on one’s degree of credulity) the genealogies of contemporary minorities. In this case, he concluded that the modern Tungus were a derivative of the ancient Eastern Yi, and therefore shared origins with the Lai Yi<sup>277</sup> and even the Shang (and therefore presumably the Han);<sup>278</sup> elsewhere he found that the contemporary Miao were an extraction from another ancient group whose ancestors came from the Central Plain and were friendly with the Zhou.<sup>279</sup> Many of these studies seem to suggest that, while ethnology tended to divide and differentiate peoples, history could unite them.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> Li Yiyuan, 2.

<sup>274</sup> Ling had just been transferred to IHP. See details below.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> I am told that, among his other pioneering accomplishments, Ling was the first to use a videocamera in his fieldwork. Li Yih-yuan, personal communication, 2005.

<sup>277</sup> 莱夷, a pre-Qin term from the *Classic of History* .

<sup>278</sup> Ling Chunsheng, *Songhuajiang xiayou de Hezhezu* (Nanjing: Academia Sinica Institute of History and Philology, 1934), 17-44.

<sup>279</sup> Ling Chunsheng and Rui Yifu, *Xiangxi Miaozu diaocha baogao* (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1947), 8-9.

<sup>280</sup> While my interpretation perhaps differs from the author’s intended meaning, here I follow Wang Mingke’s commentary in Li and Wang, 20.



This tack already appealed to those searching for a credible narrative substantiating the official Nationalist rhetoric uniting five races into a single *Zhonghua minzu*, but it became imperative as Japan unveiled its predatory ambitions in the mainland. Japan had first demanded a number of territorial concessions from China following their victory in the Sino-Japanese war in 1895. Although forced to abandon some of these demands, the Japanese made their imperial designs apparent. Then in 1905, after defeating Russia in a contest over northeast Asia, Japan acquired rights to Russian interests in the region, including the South Manchurian Railway. The Japanese imperial army remained stationed in the area, ostensibly to guard the strategic railway but more accurately to serve as the front line of Japanese expansionism. In 1910 Japan annexed Korea outright, and in the years that followed Japan watched the centralized Chinese government dissolve into regional warlordism. In 1928, as Chiang's Northern Expedition troops approached Manchuria, the Japanese army sent a substantial contingency force to Jinan in Shandong province where they temporarily but effectively checked Chiang's campaign to reunify China. This intervention sent a clear message to Chinese nationalists, leaving them embittered toward and distrustful of the Japanese.<sup>281</sup>

Then on September 18, 1931 Japanese junior officers stationed in Manchuria sabotaged their own railway and blamed local Chinese forces for the alleged attack. This Mukden Incident afforded the Japanese military a pretext for full-scale invasion and occupation of Manchuria, which then became the puppet state of Manchukuo.<sup>282</sup> The Chinese considered this seizure an outrage, but widespread boycotts in Shanghai mounted in protest resulted in the infamous bombing of the city. Years later, Fei Xiaotong

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<sup>281</sup> Spence, 363-364.

<sup>282</sup> Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Imperial Times to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 188-189.

reflected: “As a Chinese youth in the 1930s, with my country and Chinese nationhood at the crossroads of survival or extinction, I knew that my life was closely bound up with Chinese society. I realized that as long as the future of my country and my people was in doubt, so was my own.”<sup>283</sup> With the possible demise of the nation at hand, many academics chose to pick up, not a gun, but the pen.

It is no coincidence that in the following year the Institute of History and Philology published Fu Sinian’s *Brief History of the Northeast* that, like Ling’s study, used history as a means of binding Manchuria to the rest of the nation, thus presenting China as a single integrated whole.<sup>284</sup> His narrative attracted criticism for manipulating history to serve a political agenda, despite the fact that the Japanese were generating counter-narratives depicting the northeast as a contested region that never belonged to China. Li Chi produced an English-language abridgment of Fu’s history, presumably published to garner support from the international community and perhaps even to persuade the Lytton Commission, dispatched by the League of Nations, to rule in favor of Chinese sovereignty over Manchuria.<sup>285</sup> Just as history became a means of justifying and reinforcing the center’s claims on the periphery, ethnology too became a medium for integration. Significantly, Ling Chunsheng and other ethnologists credit Sun Yat-sen’s discourses on the nation for inspiring an explosion of studies—books, articles, and serials—on the Chinese *minzu* at this time.<sup>286</sup> Although he pointed out that most of these

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<sup>283</sup> Fei Xiaotong, *Toward a People’s Anthropology* (Beijing: New World Press, 1981), 2.

<sup>284</sup> Fu Sinian, *Dongbei shigang* (Beiping: Guoli zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1932).

<sup>285</sup> Li Chi, *Manchuria in History: A Summary* (Beiping: Peking Union Bookstore, 1932).

<sup>286</sup> At least forty Republican-era periodicals began their title with the phrase 民族. See *Quan guo Zhong wen qi kan lian he mu lu: 1833-1949* (Beijing: Beijing Tushuguan, 1961), 340-343.

do not represent genuine scientific ethnological research, ethnology was certainly a part of this concern for the fate of the *minzu*.<sup>287</sup>

### **Defining the National Border**

In 1934, the Academia Sinica dissolved its Ethnology Section and transferred Ling to the newly formed Fourth Section in the Institute of History and Philology where, after the History, Philology, and Archaeology Sections, it became the new Anthropology Section. Under its director, Wu Dingliang, who had received a doctorate in physical anthropology in Britain, the new Anthropology Section focused on somatometry, or gathering measurements on biological variation among China's races.<sup>288</sup> The subsequent marginalization of ethnology, and therefore Ling's own work, caused friction that eventually led to Ling's departure from the Academia Sinica, a story picked up again shortly. In the mean time, the new mix forced a compromise.

In the preceding years Ling had studied the Miao in Hunan province and the She in Zhejiang and Fujian,<sup>289</sup> but in the winter of 1934 he joined a team that, like the earlier IHP expedition to Chuankang, explored China's southwest frontier where the national border remained largely undefined. Indeed, their mission seemed most concerned with studying and defining the human boundary of this frontier. They headed first to Hong Kong and then Macao, a place that, according to their report back to IHP head Fu Sinian,

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<sup>287</sup> Ling Chunsheng, "Minzuxue shidi diaocha fangfa," *Minzuxue yanjiu jikan* 1 (1936): 45; see also Zhou Kuntian, "The 'Three People's Principles' and Establishing Borders," *Bianzheng gonglun* 1.1 (1941): 5.

<sup>288</sup> Du Zhengsheng, "Shiyusuo de guoqu, xianzai, yu weilai" in *Xueshushi yu fangfaxue de shengsi*.

<sup>289</sup> Guldin, 32.

“is the best location for studying the hybridized European and Asian race.”<sup>290</sup> The team then moved west, to a village on the border of Guangdong and Guangxi provinces, where they surveyed Hanification among the Tong, or the degree to which the Tong had literally “become Han.”<sup>291</sup> The team first gathered body measurements on over fifty of the local Tong people, presumably for comparative purposes, and then commented on their extensive cultural assimilation, noting that their language in particular represented a mix of Tong and Han languages.<sup>292</sup> The expedition continued westward where the team gathered further data on assimilation of the Yi in Yunnan province.

In 1937, Ling submitted to the IHP a simple report on his fieldwork in Yunnan over the previous year. His summary results for each of the four projects undertaken during that time divided minority groups into civilized and barbarian elements: Among the Kawa of Yunnan, now known as the Awa or Wa, those of the northwest are “domesticated,” while those in the southeast are “wild”;<sup>293</sup> the Jin are simply “regular people” today,<sup>294</sup> and not the Baige nationality; likewise the Tang dynasty Wuman, or Black Barbarians, are today’s Luoluo, while the Baiman, or White Barbarians, are now “regular people.”<sup>295</sup> Not only did Ling assume continuity from ancient ethnonyms to contemporary minorities, but it seems the purpose of his study was to calculate the degree and extent of assimilation within each group.<sup>296</sup> His research seemed to confirm that although cultural differences still exist, barbarians are indeed assimilable.

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<sup>290</sup> IHP 176-28b. The phrase reads: 歐亞混合人種.

<sup>291</sup> 漢化. Some would render this “sinicization” or “sinification,” but the literal meaning is “to become Han.”

<sup>292</sup> IHP 176-28b. The expedition went on to study the Yi of Yunnan.

<sup>293</sup> Ling’s original terms 馴 and 野 typically describe the degree to which an animal has been tamed.

<sup>294</sup> Ling uses the term 民家, which I render “regular people.”

<sup>295</sup> IHP 元 211-7.

<sup>296</sup> The full report from this fieldwork appears in the IHP’s *Renleixue jikan* 1.1 (1938).

While still in Yunnan, Ling received a message from the Academia Sinica's main office at Nanjing informing him that a confidential letter had arrived from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs recruiting him to join the Ministry's Border Survey Commission.<sup>297</sup> The project aimed to "survey the undefined southern border between Yunnan and Burma," or more accurately the border between China and Southeast Asia. The team still needed a professional mineralogist and an anthropologist,<sup>298</sup> and they had heard that the Academia Sinica had capable scholars in these fields already conducting research in Yunnan. The letter made clear that the committee would cover his salary and travel expenses for the duration of the survey, and he simply needed to arrange a time and place to meet the team. Moreover, the Academia Sinica had also received a letter directly from the Deputy Minister concerning further details about duration, expenses, and remuneration for accompanying specialists.<sup>299</sup> This expedition brought together an interest in the borderlands shared by Ling and the central government, and initiated what became a long-term collaborative effort to study and develop China's peripheral regions and peoples, a project that soon became imperative to national survival.

## **War and Frontier Studies**

In 1937 Ling, along with fellow ethnologists, were slated to undertake a national customs survey on behalf of the Central Government's Ministry of the Interior, but the Japanese invasion on July 7<sup>th</sup> cut short this massive undertaking.<sup>300</sup> The Japanese seizure

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<sup>297</sup> 外交部勘界委員會

<sup>298</sup> 人種學

<sup>299</sup> IHP 176-3b.

<sup>300</sup> Wang Jianmin, *Zhongguo minzuxue shi* v. 1 (Kunming: Yunnan jiaoyu chubanshe, 1997), 213.

of China's east coast that fall sparked a mass exodus westward to the inhospitable frontier wherein resides China's concentration of minority peoples. With the government stationed in Chongqing in Sichuan province and many academics gathered in Kunming in Yunnan province, both the state and scholars naturally turned their attention to studying and securing this region. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, the outbreak of war halted archaeological excavations at Anyang, but archaeologists were able to shift their focus from the Central Plains to the periphery: The IHP and the National Central Museum jointly sponsored ethnological and archaeological work among the Yi at Liangshan in Sichuan<sup>301</sup> and undertook similar studies in the Chuankang region of Yunnan;<sup>302</sup> Li Chi continued his analysis and writing on Anyang, but he too became involved in frontier studies as president of the short-lived Yunnan Ethnology Society.<sup>303</sup> In his presidential address, in which he acknowledged his ethnological training, he offered encouragement and advice to his beleaguered colleagues for continued ethnographic research.<sup>304</sup>

But wartime ethnology was more than ever a matter of national security. The Japanese occupation of China marks a transition from often nebulous *minzu* studies which, as mentioned earlier, could mean either ethnic groups or the nation, to a new explosion of research specifically dedicated to “the frontier” (*bianjiang*) and “frontier administration” (*bianzheng*).<sup>305</sup> For instance, in 1941 the former *Minzuxue yanjiu jikan*<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> A report on these excavations, conducted by Wu Jinding, are found in Wu Jinding, *Yunnan Cangerjing kaogu baogao* (Lizhuang: Guoli zhongyang bowuyuan, 1942).

<sup>302</sup> 川康民族考察團

<sup>303</sup> The social anthropologist Wu Wenzao, mentor and then colleague of Fei Xiaotong and Lin Yaohua, actually extended the invitation, thus acknowledging Li's expertise as an anthropologist. IHP 考 31-11-68.

<sup>304</sup> Li Ji, “Minzuxue fazhan zhi qiantu yu bijiaofa yingyong zhi xianzhi,” *Guoli Yunnan daxue shehui kexue xuebao* 1 (1940): 57.

<sup>305</sup> 邊疆 and 邊政 respectively. These included such titles as 邊政公論, 邊疆人文, 西南邊疆, 邊疆研究週刊, 邊疆通訊, 中國邊疆, 邊疆研究論叢, 邊疆文化, etc.

became *Bianzheng gonglun*, the most prominent periodical in this genre with contributions from Ling himself as well as Wu Wenzao, Lin Yaohua, and other leading ethnologists. Ling's own historiography also makes this transition apparent: Before the Japanese invasion, Ling's publications on Yunnan had focused on identifying and categorizing the various "tribes" within what he viewed as the most complicated and diverse region in China. His purpose had been to correct earlier taxonomies of Major Davies and VK Ting, who had relied on language as the primary factor in categorization, by instead taking into account "cultural, physical, historical, and especially geographic characteristics" of these tribes.<sup>307</sup> Just two years later, in 1938, in an article entitled "Meng-Ting: A Geographical Survey of a Miasma Area in the Yunnan Border," he noted that although due to war many Han had migrated to the province, they still viewed Yunnan as a dangerous area to be avoided, which was why the region remained undeveloped.<sup>308</sup> That same year he published an article entitled "The Importance of Developing the Southwest Border" in which he argued that "the southwest holds just as important a position as the northwest in the war of resistance and establishing the nation." In fact, according to Ling, one could say that the southwest "is the primary grounds for reviving the nation." He further asserted that "dutifully establishing the frontier will increase the strength of the battle of resistance while also accomplishing the mission of establishing the nation."<sup>309</sup> Throughout the war Ling explored historical precedents for border administration with articles on such topics as "The Manchu System of

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<sup>306</sup> 民族學研究集刊

<sup>307</sup> See "Yunnan minzu de dili fenbu" in Ling, 191-204.

<sup>308</sup> See "Mengding: Dianbian yige zhangqu de dili yanjiu" in Ling, 205.

<sup>309</sup> Originally published in 1938, a reprint is found in Ling Chunsheng, "Jianshe xinan bianjiang de zhongyao" in *Zhongguo bianjiang minzu yu huantaipingyang wenhua*, v. 1 (Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1979), 67.

Administering China's Borders" and "The Role of Hereditary Chieftainship in Borderland Administration," both published in the aforementioned *Bianzheng gonglun*,<sup>310</sup> and a related monograph entitled *Zhongguo bianzheng zhidu*, or *China's Frontier Administration System*.<sup>311</sup> As an ethnologist Ling already had a professional interest in China's periphery, but when a foreign enemy had by degrees seized part of the frontier and used it as a staging ground for invasion, the periphery became a matter of *national* interest. Ling believed that national survival depended on securing, developing, and effectively administering the frontier, and he was soon given the means of contributing to this cause.

### **Official National Narrative: China's Destiny**

In 1937 President Roosevelt appointed the China hand Owen Lattimore as a personal adviser to Chiang Kai-shek. In his memoirs, Lattimore said of Chiang: "He thought the way to save China was to create a trained, organized elite; and through his educated elite he intended to give the right orders to the common people and see to it that these orders were carried out."<sup>312</sup> Clearly Chiang thought of the Academia Sinica as part of his educated elite. On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1943 Ling Chunsheng received a telegram from Zhu Jiahua,<sup>313</sup> then president of the Academia Sinica and chief of the Guomindang Party Organization Department.<sup>314</sup> In this dual capacity Zhu was both privy to China's top scholarship and responsible for staffing party leadership positions. Doubtless Zhu knew

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<sup>310</sup> See reprints in Ling, *Zhongguo bianjiang minzu yu huantaipingyang wenhua*.

<sup>311</sup> 中國邊政制度

<sup>312</sup> Owen Lattimore, *China Memoirs* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1990), 135.

<sup>313</sup> 朱家驊

<sup>314</sup>



of Ling's background and skills and therefore appointed Ling to be both Xinjiang Provincial Party Officer and director of the department's Research Division, where his training and experience would come in handy working with the local Muslim population in China's vast and undeveloped westernmost "new territory." Zhu explained that Chiang Kai-shek, acting in his capacity as party chairman, had already personally approved the appointment and wished to arrange a time to meet Ling.<sup>315</sup> Ling ended up declining the offer, sending Fu Sinian to explain in person that his wife was gravely ill and that at the moment traveling to a distant and remote area would present many problems.<sup>316</sup> It may be that Ling refused for other reasons, but more offers would soon come.

In March of 1943 Chiang Kaishek wore numerous hats, serving simultaneously as Director-General of the Guomintang party, Premier of the Republic of China and therefore head of the Executive Yuan, and Chairman of the National Government (antecedent to the position of President, which he assumed upon its creation in 1948).<sup>317</sup> Despite the grandeur of his many titles, years of Japanese occupation had taken an exacting toll on the nation and its fate was by no means secure. To combat this despair, on March 10, 1943 the Guomintang party published *China's Destiny*, which described Chiang's vision of the Chinese nation.<sup>318</sup> Priced at a modest US ten cents, it was intended for mass consumption and received extensive publicity and distribution (one is reminded of the little red books of Mao's quotations a few decades later). *China's Destiny* saw two hundred printings in 1943, the *first* of which alone sold two hundred thousand copies.

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<sup>315</sup> IHP 13-4-2.

<sup>316</sup> IHP 13-4-5.

<sup>317</sup> Jonathan Fenby, *Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek and the China he Lost* (London: The Free Press, 2003).

<sup>318</sup> I rely mainly on an English translation of the original edition while key Chinese words and phrases with translation ambiguities appear in the footnotes.

The book became required reading for all civil servants and the military, while in China's schools youth were required to pass examinations based on its content. "It is thus fair to describe *China's Destiny* as the political bible of the Kuomintang, and to state that intensive efforts have been made to indoctrinate the potential leaders of China with its ideology."<sup>319</sup> This extended to China's intellectual leadership, who were also called on to support the official line.

The book begins with a succinct narrative entitled "The Growth and Development of the Chinese Nation." Predictably, the story begins five thousand years ago when the Chinese nation established itself in Asia, but already the definition of the nation had evolved. Two decades earlier, Sun Yat-sen had insisted that the Chinese people were "...completely Han Chinese. With common customs and habits, we are completely of one race."<sup>320</sup> Chiang likewise asserted that the nation "is of one stock,"<sup>321</sup> but now no longer simply the Han. Instead, for Chiang the nation was the broader *zhonghua minzu* which had grown from the continual "blending of numerous clans."<sup>322</sup> This blending continued, "dynasty after dynasty, but the motive power was cultural rather than military, and it was accomplished by assimilation rather than by conquest."<sup>323</sup>

Then, two thousand years later, many clans—branches of this originary single race—"spread along the valleys of the Yellow, Yangtze, Heilungkiang [Amur], and Pearl rivers. They maintained different cultures according to the differences in their geographic environment, and cultural differences gave rise to differences among clans."<sup>324</sup> Ling

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<sup>319</sup> Chiang Kai-shek, *China's Destiny*, trans. Philip Jaffe (New York: Roy Publishers, 1947), 20.

<sup>320</sup> William Theodore de Bary, *Sources of Chinese Tradition* vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 321.

<sup>321</sup> Jaffe, 29.

<sup>322</sup> Jaffe renders 宗支 as "clans" and 融合 as "blending."

<sup>323</sup> Jaffe, 30.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

Chunsheng had similarly argued that environment and climate determine cultural differences when he said: “It is the variety of geographic detail combined with that of climatic condition—cold in the high mountain ranges and hot in the deep river valleys—that brought about the differences in customs, languages, and modes of living of the tribes. In short, the primary factor in bringing about the bewildering complication of the tribal distinctions is due mainly to influences of geographic environment.”<sup>325</sup> Likewise, in Chiang’s narrative, *culture* distinguishes clans, not biology or lineage. Instead, shared blood lineage is in part what binds the clans together, as “...the clans of the various localities were either descendents of a common ancestor or were interrelated through marriage.”<sup>326</sup> Citing passages from the classical literature, Chiang concludes that “the main and branch stocks all belong to the same blood stream,” and “among all the clans there were either blood relationships or connections by marriage. This is how the Chinese nation was formed in ancient times.”<sup>327</sup>

By the time of the Qin and Han dynasties, Chinese civilization centered on the Central Plains. “Due to economic interdependence and the spread of a common civilization, the numerous clans in various localities had already blended together and formed one great nation”—namely, that of the Hanzu. When barbarians attacked and “the Hans migrated southward,” invaders then “occupied the Yellow River Valley. However, these clans gradually acquired the civilization of the Hans,” or became Hanified, by “adopting Chinese dress, methods of government, and culture.”<sup>328</sup> The Sui/Tang unification “was the result of four hundred years of nation-blending,” during which “the

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<sup>325</sup> Ling, 202.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 32.

many varieties of religion, philosophy, literature, art, astronomy, law, institutions, and social customs were gathered together and synthesized.” Repeated barbarian invasions resulted in their conversion to Han civilization. The assimilation of Mongolia and Xinjiang “has been taking place for more than two thousand years,” while “Tibet’s period of assimilation has lasted over thirteen hundred years....the northeast started its inward orientation even earlier.”<sup>329</sup> “When the Manchus occupied China, they were assimilated in the same way as the Nuchen Tartars. Thus, after the Revolution of 1911, the Manchus and the Chinese were really blended into one body, without the slightest trace of any difference between them.”<sup>330</sup> In this manner the Hanzu “was able by virtue of its great and enduring civilization to blend these neighboring clans into the nation.”<sup>331</sup>

Chiang then concludes his narrative by emphasizing that the history of the Chinese nation is one of common origins and blending cultures. Ancient texts and genealogies have proven that Mongols trace their ancestry to Xia dynasty, while the Yellow Emperor “is the forefather of both the Manchus and Tibetans of today.” Hui are simply Han who embraced Islam, with no difference but religion. “In short, our various clans actually belong to the same nation, as well as to the same racial stock....That there are five peoples designated in China is not due to difference in race or blood, but to religion and geographical environment. In short, the differentiation among China’s five peoples is due to regional and religious factors, and not to race or blood.”<sup>332</sup>

Sun had grappled with the quandary of forging national unity from racial diversity, seeing only loose sand that refused to congeal. But whereas he had equated Han with the

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<sup>329</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 39-40.

Chinese, emphasizing both Han descent from the Yellow Emperor and Manchu otherness, Chiang suggested that the two “clans” were both progeny of the Yellow Emperor, and in fact all clans found within China came from the same racial stock. Only superficial cultural differences distinguished these clans, yet Chiang also insists that “the customs of each clan were unified to form China’s national culture.”<sup>333</sup> With shared blood and culture, the Chinese people formed a single, united nation. If one were to accept Chiang’s narrative of historical assimilation, then the Nationalist government’s policy of assimilation and integration would merely continue a naturally occurring process.

Just three months after initial publication, and doubtless to ensure advocacy of the official view of history, Chiang Kai-shek, acting in his capacity as chair of the Military Affairs Council, sent to Fu Sinian, head of the Institute of History and Philology, a letter on the subject of the institute’s research agenda.<sup>334</sup> He first acknowledged that “for the past several years the institute has devoted itself to the study of the national history and languages, as well as ethnology and anthropology,” and expressed his “deep gratification” with the institute’s successful results. “However,” he admonished, “research on this nation’s history should both illuminate the culture of the *minzu* and foster its spirit.” He went on to explain that “for the sake of current needs, considering the relationship between academia and social morals, research on Tang culture is most important” because “the mores of both scholars and the common people [of the Tang dynasty] served as a model for later generations. I hope that from now on your institute will focus on the system of belief and politics, scholarship, society, and arts of this period.” To accomplish this he recommended that all researchers in the IHP, be they

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<sup>333</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>334</sup> Like *China’s Destiny*, Chiang may not have personally composed the letter but it bears his name and official seal. It seems clear that the ideas, if not the very words, came from Chiang himself.

historians, linguists, or anthropologists, focus on some aspect of the Tang as a specialty and publish their results “in order to change [current] social trends by working to glorify the nation’s history.”<sup>335</sup> In essence Chiang, as the head of a nation in distress, wished to buoy morale in the nadir of national history by revisiting its zenith. In spite of the candor of the message, which employed language of persuasion and entreaty, Fu Sinian’s reply to Chiang referred to the original communication as an “order” and assured him that the institute would naturally put forth every effort to comply, further enumerating ways they were meeting Chiang’s demands.<sup>336</sup>

This is not to suggest that the Academia Sinica or IHP were simply dutifully carrying out orders from above, or that their work was entirely dictated by the state. At this time Chiang and his government were in Chongqing, while the remaining IHP scholars were in Kunming, where they exercised more than a degree of autonomy. But their positions, salaries, and future (as wretched as these may have seemed at the time) were still dependent on Chiang’s government. And considering Fu’s earlier collaboration with Li Chi in propagandizing a politically motivated history of Manchuria’s relationship to China, it seems likely that their patriotism matched that of Chiang, even if all parties did not always agree on how best to serve the nation. Cai Yuanpei, for one, felt that the state, and principally the generalissimo, had betrayed the nation and so retreated to Hong Kong rather than Chongqing, where he died in 1940. Others, however, found the state agenda in line with their own.

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<sup>335</sup> IHP 李 64-1.

<sup>336</sup> IHP 李 64-2.

## Ling Chunsheng and Frontier Education: *pro patria*

As mentioned earlier, dissolution of the Ethnology Section and Ling's subsequent transfer to the Anthropology Section in 1934 left him playing second fiddle to the physical anthropologists. On several occasions Ling appealed to Fu Sinian and Zhu Jiahua for the Academia Sinica to establish an independent Ethnology Institute, but his request was always denied.<sup>337</sup> During the war, as border studies thrived, he finally succeeded in convincing the Academia Sinica to prepare a Frontier Culture Research Institute,<sup>338</sup> but in the end this too never materialized.<sup>339</sup> Disaffected with the Academia Sinica, he remained open to other career opportunities. In September of 1936 Luo Jialun,<sup>340</sup> then president of the National Central University, had invited Ling to deliver four ethnology lectures, one per week, to the geography department reporting on his work at IHP.<sup>341</sup> Then, in summer of 1943, Ling again accepted an appointment from the school, this time to establish a new Border Administration Department<sup>342</sup> within the school's College of Law.<sup>343</sup> Fu Sinian, then part of the Academia Sinica administration but still engaged in supervising the IHP, had assumed that the NCU position was temporary. When he heard rumors that Ling intended to stay in Chongqing to chair the newly founded department, he entreated Ling to remain in Lizhuang with the IHP.<sup>344</sup> Instead, Ling confessed that since he had called for an independent ethnology institute that had

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<sup>337</sup> IHP 李 13-4-27, 13-4-29.

<sup>338</sup> 邊疆文化研究所

<sup>339</sup> IHP 李 75-2, 75-3.

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<sup>341</sup> IHP 元 8-5b.

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<sup>343</sup> Unfortunately the archive documents provide month and day but not year, but from context 1943 seems very likely.

<sup>344</sup> IHP 李 13-4-16.

never materialized, he had lost face and so decided to leave the IHP in May, having already spoken with president Zhu about his resignation.<sup>345</sup> After arriving in Chongqing on the 28th of June, the Ministry of Education made him principal of the Asian Languages School,<sup>346</sup> and in July he had accepted the NCU invitation to serve concurrently as director and distinguished lecturer in the Department of Border Studies.<sup>347</sup>

On January 12<sup>th</sup> of the following year, the Ministry of Education recruited Ling to direct the Department of Frontier Education.<sup>348</sup> Just as envisioned by Ling, ethnology served the state not only in defining, administering, and developing the periphery, but in uniting and strengthening the nation. Ling Chunsheng's training in ethnology and education (he had received a degree in education from National Dongnan University) indeed assisted the state in making citizens out of the fringe folk. During the war of resistance, the central government moved to make education standardized, centralized, and compulsory.<sup>349</sup> According to official government publications, wartime border education targeted "all frontier regions" to provide education in "citizenship training" and Han language, with special emphasis on instilling "a clear understanding of the Chinese race and nation."<sup>350</sup> Textbooks and courses incorporated Sun Yat-sen's teachings on the nation in order to keep citizens on the fringes aware of "national affairs."<sup>351</sup> In short, war was a national crisis and that demanded unity, and unity would be achieved through uniformity. This propaganda endeavor continued after the war as the Ministry of

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<sup>345</sup> IHP 李 13-4-18.

<sup>346</sup> 東方語文專校

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<sup>348</sup> 邊疆教育司司長。Ling mentions the date of his appointment in IHP 李 13-4-25.

<sup>349</sup> *China Handbook* 324, 332.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*, 341.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, 327, 342.



Education appointed Ling director of the National Frontier Culture Education Committee,<sup>352</sup> where he worked with a number of well known ethnologists to oversee the production of textbooks for primary schools used to educate minorities.<sup>353</sup> June Dreyer accused this institution of serving as the Chinese state's "chief vehicle of assimilation."<sup>354</sup>

But such a Machiavellian view may be giving the government too much credit. When Ling initially assumed directorship of the Department of Frontier Education he wrote to Fu Sinian complaining that frontier education existed in name only. He was unaccustomed to spending his entire day writing reports and found himself unable to put his heart into the Ministry. He explained that his predecessor, for whom the job had been tailor-made, accomplished little other than creating many related organizations and superfluous positions with overlapping responsibilities. In exasperation, he exclaimed that the department's bureaucratization "exceeds anything seen in China or abroad from ancient times to the present." According to Ling, all the department had actually done so far was to offer general education to those *near* the border areas. As a result, he admitted he would have to start from scratch in building a foundation for frontier education by cutting and organizing. He concluded by admitting that "all hopes for this lie with me."<sup>355</sup>

Although Ling did indeed dedicate himself to furthering frontier education on behalf of the central government, apparently the grass in Yunnan seemed greener. That fall, as he continued to revamp the department, he wrote numerous times to Fu Sinian about the possibility of creating an ethnology institute within the Academia Sinica.<sup>356</sup> He confessed that for the past nine years, ever since ethnology and physical anthropology

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<sup>352</sup> 國立邊疆文化教育館館長

<sup>353</sup> *Report of the ROC Ministry of Education* 18, no. 3 (1946): 4.

<sup>354</sup> Dreyer, 18.

<sup>355</sup> IHP 李 13-4-25.

<sup>356</sup> IHP 李 13-4-27, 13-4-29.

had merged into one section, he had been grieved, as the two “differ in every way.” Although he did not mention names, part of the problem stemmed from differing visions of the purpose and placement of ethnology. Li Chi, who during the war had replaced Fu as acting director of the Institute of History and Philology, had received his training at Harvard in the four fields approach to anthropology, which included linguistics, ethnology (cultural anthropology), physical anthropology, and archaeology. Li remained orientation toward the latter two, whereas Ling, due largely to his French training, wished to align ethnology more closely with geography and sociology. After noting that the physical anthropology lab had recently petitioned for its own institute, Ling argued that if physical anthropology indeed became independent then ethnology could finally develop into an institute. The war had certainly proven the usefulness of this new and obscure discipline, catapulting Ling to the height of academics and politics. Ling himself observed that “recently more and more Chinese citizens see the importance of ethnology. Likewise two years ago the government planned to establish a Frontier Culture Research Institute within IHP. The charter for this institute stipulated that the greater part of the research work would fall within the scope of an ethnology institute.” He further pointed out that Cai himself first promoted ethnology in China, and aligned it with the social sciences. From Academia Sinica’s inception Cai had said that, given adequate funding, ethnology should have its own institute. Therefore, Ling argued, in order to realize Cai’s unfulfilled wish and serve his memory, we should see to it that ethnology develops into an institute.<sup>357</sup>

Despite his passionate appeal, Ling’s proposal was once again denied. That same year he became titular director of the Anthropology Section, but it seems he remained

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<sup>357</sup> IHP李 13-4-27.

consumed with political duties. In July of 1948 he wrote to Xia Nai, then acting director of the IHP, to resign as head of the Anthropology Section, explaining that he left the institute four years earlier and was now chair of the Ministry of Education's National Frontier Culture Education Committee.<sup>358</sup> Even so, when he followed Chiang and the Nationalist government to Taiwan later that year, Ling assisted in the migration of the Anthropology Section across the Strait where after a period of turmoil it finally settled with the rest of the Academia Sinica in Taipei's southeast suburbs. There, in 1965, Ling finally realized Cai Yuanpei's dream from nearly four decades earlier when he established an Institute of Ethnology, which today sits beside the Institute of History and Philology on the Academia Sinica campus. For the next five years Ling served as the institute's first director while Rui Yifu remained in the IHP to head the Anthropology Section.<sup>359</sup>

In his later career Ling continued to combine ethnology and history in his search for the origins of cultural connections spanning the Pacific, from southern China to South America.<sup>360</sup> His legacy of transcending modern political borders is readily apparent in the careers of students such as KC Chang and Li Yih-yuan, who agreed that Ling's greatest contribution was in "expanding the conceptual realm of Chinese culture."<sup>361</sup> What remains overlooked is how this work coincides with his vision of the nation and how the state became his means of propagating that vision.

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<sup>358</sup> IHP 雜 23-15-22.

<sup>359</sup> Li Yiyuan, "Ling Chunsheng," 1.

<sup>360</sup> A representative collection of Ling's works in this area is found in the dual volume *Zhongguo bianjiang minzu yu huantaipingyang wenhua* cited earlier.

<sup>361</sup> Li Yiyuan, "Ling Chunsheng," 4.

## LI CHI AND EVOLVING NARRATIVES OF THE CHINESE RACE, 1950-1977

### **Nine Tribes: Colonialism and Ethnology**

The end of WWII and the defeat of Japan saw the retrocession of Taiwan, for fifty years a Japanese colony, back to China (though in this case to the Republic of China rather than the Qing). Once the ROC government acquired Taiwan, Chinese anthropologists like Ling Chunsheng and Li Chi wasted no time in assuming aboriginal studies from the previous Japanese colonizers. The Academia Sinica was relocated a number of times, eventually resettling in Nangang (Nankang) in the southeast suburbs of Taipei. There Ling Chunsheng headed the Institute of Ethnology while Li Chi directed the Institute of History and Philology, retaining that portion of the Institute's personnel who had not remained in the mainland. WWII ended fifty years of Japanese administration of the island, and repatriation of Japanese nationals left open Taihoku Imperial University in Taipei.<sup>362</sup> Fu Sinian accepted an appointment as president of the university, now renamed National Taiwan University (Taida), and he recruited many of the Academia Sinica researchers to serve simultaneously as university professors (a tradition that continues to this day). Fu commissioned Li Chi to create a Department of Archaeology and Anthropology (now all subsumed under anthropology) which immediately resumed Japanese colonial studies of Taiwan's other—the island's non-Chinese indigenous tribal peoples. Taida not only had a developed anthropology curriculum that followed the four fields "Harvard model," it was the first Chinese

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<sup>362</sup> 臺北帝國大學. This was one of nine imperial universities in Japan's wartime empire.

institution to offer a degree in archaeology.<sup>363</sup> The department began accepting students in the fall of 1949, with Li Yih-yuan and K.C. Chang (to be discussed hereafter) among the earliest to enroll. Li Chi served as adviser to this first generation of students in Taiwan, teaching courses in Introduction to Archaeology and Anthropology, Prehistory, Physical Anthropology,<sup>364</sup> a more advanced course in Anthropometry,<sup>365</sup> and ultimately directed the senior theses of both Chang and Li.<sup>366</sup> Though he built his professional career in the field of archaeology, significantly Li left Shi Zhangru to teach the department's archaeology courses while he took it upon himself to teach physical anthropology and anthropometry, subjects he had specialized in as a graduate student and retained as a primary interest.

Once in Taiwan the ROC government, and Chinese anthropologists in particular, proceeded to build on the Japanese colonial framework, adopting the imperial Japanese taxonomy which divided the island's indigenous population into nine tribes and immediately set to work studying them as Taiwan's other.<sup>367</sup> Because it was believed that Taiwan's inhabitants were either Chinese who had emigrated from the mainland primarily in the Ming or Qing dynasties or indigenous tribal "highland" peoples without any history of civilization,<sup>368</sup> scholars at the time saw no need to conduct archaeological studies on the island. Once again in the periphery, without access to the Central Plains, Li

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<sup>363</sup> Li Chi, *Anyang* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 142.

<sup>364</sup> 體質人類學

<sup>365</sup> 人體測量

<sup>366</sup> Much of this information on Li Chi and his early courses in Taiwan comes from Li Chi's NTU (Taida) teaching files now held by the Archaeology Section of the Academia Sinica Institute of History and Philology. At the time of research (2007) I was the first person to go through the collection, which consisted solely of a box of loose articles without a catalogue, accession numbers, or any organization whatsoever. My thanks both to the IHP, the Archaeology Section, and especially Lin Yuyun for access to these documents.

<sup>367</sup> Liu Wuxiong, "Ribei xue ren zhi gao shan zu yan jiu" *Bulletin of Institute of Ethnology* 40 (1975): 5-17.

<sup>368</sup> According to convention at that time, Li and others referred to the natives of Taiwan as 山地人.

Chi reprised his role as ethnologist just as he had done during wartime while among the tribal peoples of China's southwestern frontier. In the summer of 1949, immediately upon arrival on the island, he put together an expedition to a tribal area in the vicinity of Taizhong (Taichung) on behalf of the government and supported by National Taiwan University and the Academia Sinica, employing scholars affiliated with both institutions. The report generated by the group, published the following year in the provincial gazetteer, became part of the *Special Collection on Tribal Culture* entitled "A Report on Preliminary Ethnological Investigation in Ruiyan."<sup>369</sup> The team of ten scholars included a number of prominent archaeologists who had excavated Anyang, including Li himself, Dong Zuobin, Shi Zhangru, and Song Wenxun, as well as ethnologists like Rui Yifu and Chen Qilu. This was their first project in Taiwan and each scholar was responsible for studying a different aspect of Atayal society (one of the nine "tribes"),<sup>370</sup> detailing how these natives differed from the Chinese in areas such as population, education, family structure, hygiene, material culture, religion, concept of time, genealogy, and, for Li Chi, the physical properties of the natives. Li used anthropometric tools from both the Academia Sinica and National Taiwan University Ethnology Research Office to take precise body measurements of 216 individuals in the Ruiyan community, assisted in this endeavor by Rui Yifu, Song Wenxun, and Dong Zuobin (the last two individuals having been part of Li's Anyang excavation team). Following the standards set by the International Anthropology Society, Li's study included measurements of stature, span, sitting height, head length, head breadth, auditory height, frontal diameter, bizygomatic diameter, bigonial diameter, facial height, head circumference, nasal height, nasal width,

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<sup>369</sup> *Rui yan min zu xue chu bu diao cha bao gao* (Taipei: Taiwan Provincial Document Committee, 1950). This is a rather rare document, with a copy shelved at the Fu Sinian Library of the Academia Sinica.

<sup>370</sup> 泰雅族

and upper facial height. But he also surveyed certain “immeasurable” characteristics of the Atayal, such as skin color, hair, eyes, eyebrows, forehead, glabella, form of nose (bridge, nostrils, cavity, and partition), cheekbone, mouth, teeth, lower jaw and jaw angle, and ear, all in accordance with the standards of Peking Union Medical College. Having gathered the raw data Li then employed some complex formulas to calculate averages for the various indexes, and compared these numbers with the biometrical statistics for Taiwan’s other indigenous tribes taken earlier by a Japanese physical anthropologist. From all this Li concluded, among other things, that Ruyian males exhibit two important traits—a relatively long torso and long legs. “Among all the highland peoples (Taiwan natives), Ruyian adult males have the longest legs of those compared. The sitting height of Ruyian males is 50.92 on average; this short sitting height index is truly rare among all groups in East Asia.”<sup>371</sup>

Li’s purpose with the study was to isolate some unique identifying characteristics of the Atayal in particular and of Taiwan’s tribal peoples collectively. He took as a model a similar study performed on “Chinese of the North China Plain”—in other words, the Han. It was assumed that not only were Han direct descendents of the original inhabitants of the Central Plains, but they also resided farthest from the periphery and therefore remained relatively insulated, historically having minimal contact with or defilement from barbarians. “Huabeiren” were therefore racially the purest of the Chinese people who could most clearly represent an unadulterated Chinese somatotype. This study showed that people of the North China Plain tended to share two unique characteristics—the so-called “Mongoloid fold” present in the eyelid, and “shovel-shaped upper

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<sup>371</sup> Ibid., 77.

incisors.”<sup>372</sup> The reader will recall the significance of this from earlier chapters, the shovel-shaped incisor being a physical link between Peking Man and modern Han. As Li himself put it: “Modern physical anthropologists acknowledge that the uniqueness of these two traits is the most apparent quality of the Yellow Race. Many taxonomists use these two traits as a mark of Yellow Race classification, of equal importance to hair quality and skin color. But the frequency of the appearance of these two traits in the bodies of those of the Yellow Race still does not receive sufficient recognition.”<sup>373</sup>

After reviewing Stevenson’s statistics on the appearance of the Mongoloid fold and shovel-shaped upper incisor among his subjects of the North China Plain, Li concluded his own study with similar statistics for the Ruiyan community. Although many of the older people had lost their teeth and some youth had swapped their originals for gold teeth, still as expected the measurements of this Atayal population of Taiwan clearly differ from those of the Han. Put simply, all the charts and statistics boil down to this: In the Han, the Mongoloid fold is only absent about 9% of the time, whereas the shovel-shaped upper incisors are missing in 18.2% of cases—in other words, among the Han, it is twice as likely that one has the requisite fold and lacks the teeth than the other way around. However, from Li’s data with the natives, those who have the fold and lack the teeth altogether account for 5% of the subject pool, whereas those who have the teeth and lack the fold total around 37% of the Ruiyan population. In short, for Han the Mongoloid fold is more prevalent than the shovel-shaped upper incisor, but for Atayal the opposite is true. He then concludes his study by emphasizing that both the Mongoloid fold and shovel-shaped upper incisor are important physical characteristics of the

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<sup>372</sup> Paul H. Stevenson, “Detailed Anthropometric Measurements of the Chinese of the North China Plain” *Anthropologia Sinica* no. 2 (1938).

<sup>373</sup> *Rui yan*, 78.



Mongoloid race, and that each trait probably has different origins and principles of inheritance.<sup>374</sup>

But whereas the mere presence of these two traits had earlier identified the Chinese, the *ratio* of one feature to the other became a defining characteristic of both the Han and Atayal and therefore a means of distinguishing one from the other, or of measuring the biological distance between the two groups. The enigmatic reference to heredity suggests a heuristic dimension to this relative distance—they have been separate and distinct peoples for some time. In fact simple statistics on the presence of these traits among the Atayal would not suffice, since these revealed that about half of the subjects in Ruiyan had *both* the Mongoloid fold and shovel-shaped upper incisor—enough to nominate them to candidacy as Chinese. But in this case Li and his team were clearly bent on discovering differences rather than similarities. This example underscores an important political point—while Taiwan’s indigenous peoples have never been considered Chinese under the ROC government, and therefore remain outside the Chinese national narrative, the Taiwanese were until very recently considered Chinese. The People’s Republic of China in the mainland adopted a very different approach to the island’s natives, classifying them as Chinese (but not Han), a discrepancy we shall return to in the chapter following.

### **Peking Man and Origin of the Chinese Race**

In contrast to his study of the physical properties of the mountain tribes of Taiwan, in 1950, the same year the Ruiyan report was published, Li contributed the lead article in

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<sup>374</sup> Ibid., 79.

the initial publication of *Dalu zazhi*, or *Mainland Magazine*, entitled “Origin of the Chinese People.”<sup>375</sup> While Li’s ethnological fieldwork among the natives ended as quickly as it began, this article and others after it synthesized Li’s expertise in both archaeology and physical anthropology in seeking the origins of the Chinese people.

Ever since his doctoral research at Harvard Li’s work had focused on the question of the *Formation of the Chinese People*, but so many revelatory discoveries had occurred in the intervening twenty-seven years that Li reapplied himself to the old question with renewed vigor. Before the unearthing of China’s prehistoric cultures Li and revolutionaries, and in fact anyone interested in China’s remote past, had of necessity relied on literary accounts of dubious authenticity concerning the emergence of the Chinese people and their civilization. But the series of archaeological and paleontological discoveries in the 1920s, beginning with Andersson’s discovery of the Yangshao Neolithic culture, then the Pleistocene era remains of Peking Man at Zhoukoudian, Li’s own excavation of the Shang capital at Anyang, and later the Longshan Black Pottery Culture, all demanded serious revision of established narratives of China’s origins. Reconciling the new scientific evidence with long ensconced literary tropes posed a real challenge.

With his new approach to the “Origin of the Chinese People,” Li proposed to write Peking Man, and indeed all the human remains found in the cave of Zhoukoudian south of Beijing, into his narrative of the formation of the Chinese nation. In the immediate postwar period when Li served as a cultural adviser to the Chinese delegation stationed in occupied Japan, his duties involved the location and repatriation of important cultural relics plundered by the Japanese during their occupation of China, including the

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<sup>375</sup> Li Chi, “Zhongguo min zu zhi shi,” *Da lu za zhi* 1:1 (1950): 2-5.

relics of Anyang. Although he found a number of important antiquities, he always regretted his failure to locate the famed Peking Man skull,<sup>376</sup> a loss he referred to as “another casualty of war.”<sup>377</sup> Like everyone else, Li saw Peking Man as a most important key in the evolution of mankind, but his precise role in the formation of the Chinese people remained ambiguous. Li took for granted that Peking Man too was part of the northern stock of the Mongoloid race, the same as other Chinese, but what most concerned Li was heuristically linking the peoples of Zhoukoudian in a linear series, beginning with Peking Man of half a million years ago with the Upper Cave Man of over twenty thousand years ago, culminating in modern Chinese of the Zhoukoudian region. Li reasoned that because China’s traditional histories fail to reference anything earlier than five thousand years ago, more than ten thousand years *after* the last cave culture of Zhoukoudian, therefore when Emperor Yan fought his great battle the Zhoukoudian remains were already fossilized.<sup>378</sup> Such an idea “forced Chinese historians to alter their views. Just at the time when sage kings such as the Yellow Emperor, Yao, Shun, and Yu were being dismissed as mythical, the spades of paleontologists and archaeologists suddenly uncovered a ‘modern human’ [homo sapien] more than ten thousand years older than the Yellow Emperor.”<sup>379</sup>

As discussed in chapter three, under the influence of the May Fourth Movement and a new faith in scientific empiricism, Gu Jiegang and the “doubters of antiquity” had

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<sup>376</sup> *Zhongguo xian dai she hui ke xue jia zhuan lue*, 162.

<sup>377</sup> Li, “Zhongguo min zu zhi shi,” 2.

<sup>378</sup> According to tradition and certain histories, Yandi 炎帝 was one of the Three Sovereigns 三皇, China’s earliest sage-rulers viewed as demigods. Yandi was also known as Shennong 神農, the divine farmer, because of the belief that he taught mankind how to cultivate grains and harness the medicinal properties of herbs. Yandi and the Yellow Emperor are still often mentioned together as joint progenitors of the Han, otherwise known as Yan/Huang descendents 炎黃子孫.

<sup>379</sup> Li, “Zhongguo min zu zhi shi,” 2.

challenged the existence of these early mythical personages from classical histories, even calling into question the Xia and Shang dynasties for which there existed no evidence at the time. But when Li Chi's excavation of Anyang in 1928 proved the existence of the Shang beyond any doubt, skepticism gave way to renewed faith in the classical stories. As Li himself put it, "those Doubters of Antiquity stopped their utterance of some of the most flaming nonsenses as soon as the discoveries of Anyang were made known."<sup>380</sup> Evidence of the Shang naturally led Li to believe that the Xia dynasty and even the sage kings before that could have been real historical figures. Li argued that the Zhoukoudian discovery doesn't *disprove* the existence of the ancient sages; in fact it implies their existence is *more* likely. "The discovery of underground materials shows that the Chinese minzu and Chinese culture are actually *older* than recorded in traditional histories, a fact now accepted by orthodox historians." In effect, Li was saying that the new fields of paleontology and archaeology revealed that the Chinese minzu antedates even the sage kings, which for millennia represented the origins of Chinese civilization.<sup>381</sup> Whereas revolutionaries had rather arbitrarily assigned a birthdate of 2704 BCE to the Yellow Emperor, which placed the genesis of the Chinese nation in hoary antiquity, Li and other scientists actually outdid them by pushing the national origins into an immemorial past, far beyond the heuristic limitations of history. This effectively made China timeless, without beginning or end.<sup>382</sup>

In constructing his earlier narrative of 1923 Li had self-avowedly accepted Sun Yatsen's concept of Han (or "We group") as descendents of the Yellow Emperor, if not

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<sup>380</sup> Li Chi, "Importance of the Anyang Discoveries in Prefacing Known Chinese History with a New Chapter," *Zhong yang yan jiu yuan yuan kan* 2.1 (1955): 964.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>382</sup> Benedict Anderson suggested that this is often the case with nationalists. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), 11.

as hard historical fact at least in principle.<sup>383</sup> But by 1950 Li had to reconcile his narrative with Chiang Kaishek's revision of the official party line as manifested in *China's Destiny*, which had implicitly rejected the Yellow Emperor *in toto*. Although he believed that archaeological findings supported the likelihood of a historical Yellow Emperor, Li now rejected the idea of the Yellow Emperor as father of the Chinese race, saying that "the idea of so-called 'Children of the Yellow Emperor' really is just a kind of legend full of cultural meaning certainly not befitting the reality of raceology."<sup>384</sup> As suggested by his study on the Ruiyan people, race was now based not on literature but on quantifiable scientific evidence. Even so, this was not the last time the Yellow Emperor appeared in Li's historical narratives of the Chinese nation, as we shall see.

In his article Li then reviewed the conclusions of other, and importantly Western, scholars on Zhoukoudian, who essentially argued that the cave remains were not Chinese. One scholar suggested that the upper cave man at Zhoukoudian was taller than the average northern Chinese, more closely resembling Europe's Cro-Magnon Man. Li, however, utilizing his background in physical anthropology, was careful to point out how this skull differs from European counterparts in four ways: nose bone, cheek bone, area below the nostril, and the gums.<sup>385</sup> What really seems to have irked Li, however, is that Franz Weidenreich concluded that the family within the upper cave "originally belonged to an outside nomadic tribal group who were exterminated by the natives of the Zhoukoudian area, who represent the true original Chinese people. According to Weidenreich these imagined Paleolithic original Chinese were never discovered. This is disappointing for those of us studying the history of the Chinese *minzu*, but the lapse of

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<sup>383</sup> Li, *Formation of the Chinese People*,

<sup>384</sup> 人種學. See Li, "Zhongguo min zu zhi shi," 4.

<sup>385</sup> Li, "Zhongguo min zu zhi shi," 3.

time since his analysis allows us to reexamine this question from a new perspective;”<sup>386</sup>  
in other words, to revise Weidenreich’s conclusions.

Weidenreich indeed suggested that Peking Man and the other cave dwellers were not Chinese, but for Li the problem lies in Weidenreich’s definition of Chinese. According to Li’s line of reasoning, because we currently lack data on human physical traits across all of China, we therefore cannot say definitively what the Chinese somatotype really is. Because we don’t know what the Chinese somatotype is, how can one conclude that these remains were *not* Chinese? Therefore Li advocated “a large-scale study of human body measurements, at the very least 1,000 people in every county. Only then will we know the racial composition of the Chinese *minzu*, and only then can our use of the term ‘Chinese’ carry any real meaning.” In essence, Li hoped to establish standards on the physical properties of the Chinese. Such a study would put to rest, as Li put it, the “question of the Chinese race.”<sup>387</sup>

Although Li never did return to the mainland, and so never had opportunity to fulfill this wish, he made every effort to engage this question within the limited scope of Taiwan. Immediately following the Ruiyan report, in the years 1951 and 1952 respectively, Li proposed and then directed detailed studies conducted by his star pupils, Li Yih-yuan and K.C. Chang,<sup>388</sup> on the physical properties of the school’s incoming freshmen class, even contributing a preface to the first.<sup>389</sup> Both studies addressed the

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<sup>386</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> In an obituary on Li Chi, K.C. Chang mentioned that Li was the “most difficult teacher to satisfy” (see Cho-yun Hsu and Kwang-chih Chang, “Obituary: Li Chi,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 40:1 (1980): 217-219). An examination of Li’s gradebooks, part of his NTU collection mentioned above, reveals that in the first four years teaching at the university he dispensed only five “A”s—three to K.C. Chang and two to Li Yih-yuan.

<sup>389</sup> Li Yih-yuan, “Benxiao sishi niandu xinsheng de tizhi,” *Guoli Taiwan daxue xiaokan* no. 155 (1952). Chang Kwang-chih, “Taida sishiyi xueniandu xinsheng tizhi,” *Kaogu renleixue kan*, no. 3 (1954): 43.

lacuna Li had mentioned earlier; that is, the lack of detailed biometrical statistics spanning China. In searching for “physical traits of the modern Han,” Chang relied on such earlier studies as Stevenson’s on the north China plain, C.H. Liu’s which divided the Han into three “races,” including Yellow River, Yangzi River, and Pearl River types, and that of E. A. Hooton, Li’s former adviser at Harvard. Yet earlier works constituted only the proverbial tip of the iceberg, “still not enough to constitute a solid foundation for research on Han physical traits.”<sup>390</sup> Therefore he examined Taida’s freshman class, dividing them into four groups by region—north, central, south, and Taiwan—and compiling statistics on their respective features.

In “Origin of the Chinese People,” Li went on to say that part of the problem arises from the fact that “Chinese” as a term, its anthropological meaning, still adheres to an archaic im/pure dichotomy. “From this we can understand that Weidenreich was a little too certain in concluding that no relationship exists between upper cave man and Paleolithic Chinese. In fact, there is not an anthropologist capable of proving that within the bloodline of ancient and modern Chinese there is no element passed down from Zhoukoudian’s upper cave. For this we must await the accumulated data from archaeology and biometrics, only then will we answer this question.” Ostensibly modern science would yield the necessary data for a comparison between the Zhoukoudian inhabitants and the Chinese people in order to establish their biological relationship. For Li proving such a relationship—showing that the cave’s inhabitants were part of the Chinese *minzu*—was all important, but he never addressed *why* he or anyone else should care about making Chinese ancestors out of a pile of fossilized bones. In fact, keeping

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<sup>390</sup> Chang, 44.

Peking Man and the ancient Zhoukoudian population within the Chinese family represented a matter of national interest. Ensuring that the earliest humans (and even hominids) in the area are designated Chinese is a political statement suggesting that *modern* Chinese are indigenous to the area—heirs to the original inhabitants with legitimate claims to a particular territory. The tactic thus meshes human and physical geography to make a nation (people + territory).

Li then went on to speculate about exactly how these remains fit into the national biography, but their variety of physical features made this a unique challenge. Following Blumenbach's racial configuration, the "family" of the uppermost cave, according to Weidenreich, consisted of a "white" Eskimo, "yellow" Mongoloid, and "black" Melanesian. Ernest Hooton, Li's adviser at Harvard, had written about this Chinese man with an Eskimo wife and a Melanesian wife in *Up from the Ape*.<sup>391</sup> But Hooton substituted a "primitive European White" similar to the modern Ainu for Weidenreich's primitive Mongoloid, and

Everyone knows that modern Melanesians and Ainu, according to the system of racial classification,<sup>392</sup> are respectively of the black race and white race... So according to the conclusions of Weidenreich and Professor Hooton, it seems as if the skeletal remains of Zhoukoudian's uppermost cave represent a family formed from three different modern races of yellow, black, and white.

This supposition presents an interesting quandary—if Li insisted on including this "peculiar family" in the history of the Chinese people it would directly counter earlier narratives of Chinese racial purity predicated on direct descent from a regal ancestor. Li's dilemma, one assumes, was whether to sully Han blood by including other races in the genealogy or whether to exclude the Zhoukoudian remains altogether. Or as Li put it, in

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<sup>391</sup> Pg. 402.

<sup>392</sup> 人種分類的體系.



an interesting equation of physiology and culture: “If we admit that Zhoukoudian upper cave culture is late Paleolithic Chinese culture, then we must as a matter of course admit that the human bones remaining there also represent part of the formation of the Chinese *minzu* at that time.” The operative phrase here is “part of”—the Zhoukoudian peoples may have *contributed* to the formation of the Chinese *minzu*, but there is no suggestion that the Chinese came of miscegenation of white, black, and yellow races. Conveniently by this time Li had moved beyond the simple ideas of racial purity held in the early Republic, but he retained the idea of the *persistence* of races.

Moving along chronologically in the narrative, he suggests that these prehistoric races exhumed at Zhoukoudian endured in China, later appearing in the ancient histories as crude ethnonyms: Annals of the two Zhou periods “record the appearance of peoples with black features,” and the Shanhaijing tells of a country of “Maomin (hairy people) corresponding exactly with Japan’s Ainu.”<sup>393</sup> What these “reliable histories” suggest is that twenty thousand years *after* their appearance in the cave these same black and white races were still active in the Yellow River valley—and not exterminated by Weidenreich’s imagined Chinese (after all, as Li argues, it would be antithetical to the fundamental principles of the Chinese *minzu* to exterminate rather than educate a people of difference, a sentiment completely in line with Chiang Kaishek’s narrative in *China’s Destiny*).

Although the various races do transcend time, existing in the prehistoric, historic, and present, yet they clearly do not exist in modern China; therefore one must ask what became of these black and white races living within the realm of the Han. Li made it clear that they were not exterminated—the Chinese people are incapable of such an atrocity.

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<sup>393</sup> Li, “Zhongguo min zu zhi shi,” 5.

But neither was Li prepared to allow the “Chinese race” to become a hybridized derivation of older, and purer, foreign races. Instead he devised a means for the Chinese to become, via natural selection, a product of China itself. This again conflates geography with biology, enabling the yellow earth and the yellow river of northern China to spawn the yellow race. It has been said that the magic of nationalism turns chance into destiny,<sup>394</sup> and in Li’s narrative we see this magic at work:

China’s climatic cycle, soil quality, variety of grains, distribution of ores, and certain other as yet unknown elements within the natural environment collectively selected a black hair, yellow skin people as the masters of this piece of earth. Natural selection drove the ‘hairy people’ originally close to (part of) the white race to the eastern sea, while the originally diverse and numerous ‘short people’ of black blood lineage were driven to the southern hemisphere. The formation of the Chinese *minzu* occurred in the north—the northern yellow earth selected the physical characteristics of the Chinese *minzu*, just like the Baltic Sea produced the Nordic *minzu*; like the environment of India blackened island peoples; just like the forest climate of Africa enlarged the nostrils of the black race.<sup>395</sup>

Echoing the environmental determinism and racial mutability from *China’s Destiny*, Li privileged phenotype over genotype, concluding:

Environment is not all powerful, but present anthropologists make heredity too mysterious, always looking to heredity to explain everything. In the end, some things are still not clearly explained. We should put some effort into seeking the direct ties between man and nature.”<sup>396</sup>

## Emerging Themes

Following the discovery of Anyang in 1928 Li Chi devoted his life to studying China’s earliest *historical* period, but in fact he had pioneered Chinese archaeology when he discovered and excavated the Neolithic Yangshao finds at Xiyincun three years earlier.

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<sup>394</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), 12.

<sup>395</sup> Li, “Zhongguo min zu zhi shi,” 5.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*

Although preoccupied with Shang civilization, his interest in prehistory never waned, and he was determined to link the two. The discovery of Pleistocene-era human remains at Zhoukoudian in the 1920s marks the beginning of Chinese paleoanthropology, and in the 1950s, following cessation of the Anyang excavation, years of warfare, and the move to Taiwan, Li found inspiration in *China's Destiny* to devise a national narrative that would include Zhoukoudian's Paleolithic remains, Neolithic Yangshao and Longshan cultures, the Shang, and modern Chinese. More particularly, it was Chiang's trope of consanguinity among all China's peoples, Han and minorities alike, that allowed Li to turn from earlier revolutionary-era ideas of racial purity and allow for a degree of racial mixing (although Li never embraced Chiang's ideas wholesale). As Weidenreich, Black, and others had already pointed out, the Zhoukoudian remains were not only clearly different from modern Chinese, but they also represented what was considered a variegated mixture of races; therefore in order to include them in the national narrative Li suggested that these prehistoric peoples are *part of* the Chinese pedigree and therefore *contributed* to the development of the Chinese minzu. This allowance for integration certainly differs from Li's earliest narratives and that of the revolutionaries, but jibes well with the official wartime narrative generated by Chiang Kaishek.

In one particular paragraph, for example, Li rejects the earlier proclivity to equate Chinese history with Han history, or in fact privileging any one race over another, in saying: "Supposing we didn't have any preconceptions regarding the formation of racial properties of the Chinese minzu—we *should then grant equal attention/weight to all colors of people within the realm of China and their place in China's national history.*"

Such an argument attempts to incorporate China's marginalized peoples into the mainstream of the national narrative. He then continues:

If it is true that a certain racial or ethnic constituent of a certain time period occupied a superior position within China's realm—Mongols, Manchus—we cannot deny their contribution to the growth of the Chinese nation (*minzu*) in that period, but to say that they then *represent* the Chinese *minzu* of that period is clearly inconsistent with the facts. As with recent history, in ancient history and in prehistory the process of the formation of the Chinese *minzu* never really stagnated in a fixed stage. As a result, those referred to in history as the 'Han *minzu*,' 'Zhou *minzu*,' 'Yin *minzu*,' 'Xia *minzu*,' none of these single races/clans (*zu*) in their heyday alone occupied all of China at that time.<sup>397</sup>

What Li seems to be saying is that no particular ethnic group can represent all China or all Chinese (and most certainly not Manchus or Mongols), even if they held political control at a certain time. This apparently includes not only those formerly referred to as barbarians but the Han as well—the Chinese are not simply Han, but a broader, more diverse mix of peoples. He also makes plain that although the Chinese *minzu* spans time, prehistory to present, it “never really stagnated in a fixed stage” but has changed and evolved over time—in short, Li has worked the concept of racial mutability into the narrative. By this time Li professed a belief in the idea that environment determines the evolution of human morphology, or what biologists call “adaptive differentiation,” which for the Chinese race meant that China's unique ecology and climate determined the Chinese somatotype. Historically, white and black (non-Yellow) racial elements were eventually drawn out of China to their own areas because the Yellow River region of the Central Plains was most conducive to developing the Yellow Race.

The final and perhaps most pronounced change in Li's racial narrative of the Chinese involves the Yellow Emperor. Li believed that even as archaeological evidence,

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<sup>397</sup> Li, “Zhongguo min zu zhi shi,” 5. Emphasis added.

including that accumulated by his own hand, suggested that the Yellow Emperor was a factual historical figure, by this time Li had rejected the Yellow Emperor as father of the Chinese race, an idea he now deems unscientific. All these revisions in Li's narrative seem to have occurred in conjunction with the Japanese invasion and the government's conscious efforts to retain and incorporate the periphery, hence the pronounced influence of *China's Destiny*. Over the next several decades these trends continued, his ideas morphing into narratives now current and familiar.

### **Anyang and the Chinese Race**

A few years later, in 1953, Li presented a paper before the Eighth Pacific Science Congress entitled "Importance of the Anyang Discoveries in Prefacing Known Chinese History with a New Chapter." As witnessed in Li's dissertation, long before his excavation of Anyang Li subscribed to the prevalent idea that the Central Plain was the homeland of the Chinese people and cradle of their civilization. The discovery of Anyang only served to reinforce an inherent proclivity to privilege the north: "It has become abundantly clear, after the Anyang discoveries have been made, that the Early Historical Chinese Culture is essentially a North China creation." According to Li the unique aspects of "oriental culture," including the written script, scapulimancy, sericulture, and decorative art, all "originated and developed in North China, representing respectively the religious, economic and artistic life of the early Chinese."<sup>398</sup> Anyang provided not only the earliest known examples of scapulimancy and therefore a written script, but also

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<sup>398</sup> Li Chi, "Importance of the Anyang Discoveries in Prefacing Known Chinese History with a New Chapter." *Annals of the Academia Sinica* 2.1 (1955): 99.

served as the link, both racially and culturally, between the inhabitants of Neolithic and historical north China.

With regard to the latter, Li explained that “skeletal remains recovered from the Anyang sites show an assemblage of physical traits deviating only within a limited scope from those of the aeneolithic northern Chinese.”<sup>399</sup> This “limited deviation” refers to the higher figures in Li’s measurements of Anyang skulls: “The Yin people, in other words, possessed a bigger head than the prehistorical folks of North China.”<sup>400</sup> Despite this anomaly, for Li “there is hardly any doubt that the Yin people were essentially mongoloid, just as the inhabitants of North China in the prehistorical period were, and the Chinese of the historical period have always been.”<sup>401</sup> All evidence for this racial continuity he pins on a single physiological trait already familiar to the reader:

I have examined, at random, most of the upper frontal incisors still existent and intact in the Hou-chia-chuang skulls, and found them all shovel-shaped. It is a well-known theory that this particular morphological character is distinctively Mongolian. The almost universal presence of such a physical trait among the Hou-chia-chuang skulls is sufficient to prove their racial character.<sup>402</sup>

In other words, the Shang were decidedly Chinese.

In the Anyang finds Li perceived not only racial continuity but also a transcendent Chinese culture. “Many of the magnificent bronze articles discovered in Anyang derived their forms from Neolithic prototypes; the shapes of bronze vessels after those made of pottery and wood, and bronze tools and weapons copied faithfully shapes of those of the stone. The continuity of forms exhibited thru different media furnish another clue, indicating the close relationship of the Yin Culture to the culture developed in the

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<sup>399</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid., 101-2.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

Neolithic age.”<sup>403</sup> In all these links, whether racial or cultural, “early Chinese history was found merged into protohistory, and protohistory into prehistory in a close succession.”<sup>404</sup>

But having linked prehistoric and historic northern China, Li also emphasized that much greater continuity exists, whether ethnic, racial, cultural, or political, from Shang civilization to the Zhou and onward. And while in this instance Li limited his discussion of continuity to northern China, yet he went on to explain that the core did not develop independent of other influences; it was in fact

enriched by the ability of the people responsible for this culture, to absorb all the useful cultural elements thru actual contacts with alien nations and adopt a receptive attitude towards new ideas, whose world migration was already current at the close of the Neolithic time.<sup>405</sup>

In other words, although the seed of the Chinese nation germinated in the Central Plains, the increasing movement of people and ideas enabled the nascent Chinese nation to enhance itself by “absorbing” useful elements from other, outside groups. This acknowledges migration, contact, and cultural exchange with “alien” peoples in the process of national development. Traditionally cultural borrowing was thought of as unidirectional—from the center outward, with barbarians adopting sinic civilization rather than the other way around. This theme of the core’s assimilation of alien cultural elements, though barely touched on here, harkens back to *China’s Destiny* and became increasingly conspicuous in Li’s later narratives as we shall see. But at this time Li limited exchanges and assimilation to “cultural elements” and “ideas,” refusing to follow Chiang’s lead in proclaiming an all-out racial integration of China. The biological unity of the Chinese was a trope that would only emerge later in Li’s discourses.

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<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid., 92.

## The Beginnings of Chinese Civilization

In the mid-1950s when the University of Washington issued an invitation for Li to visit as a lecturer on ancient China he again revisited the question of Chinese morphology, beginning his lectures with the question of “the racial history of the Chinese people.”<sup>406</sup> After relating the multiracial properties of Zhoukoudian’s upper cave, he concluded that the Ainu element “played an important role in the formation of the Chinese people in the protohistorical period,” but they were a minority.<sup>407</sup> Likewise the Melanesian element is confirmed by China’s ancient artworks, replete with figures “Negroid in appearance.”<sup>408</sup> Li is careful to point out, however, that “down to the close of the Neolithic time in North China, the people who dominated this area were Mongoloid,” a phenotype “essentially similar to that represented by the present-day Northern Chinese.”<sup>409</sup> Due to this continuity, prehistoric north China populations could be called “proto-Chinese.”

Note here that although Li made steps toward incorporating historically marginal peoples in mainstream Chinese history (a la *China’s Destiny*) they play only an ancillary role—therefore he remains narrowly focused on the peoples of northern China, a proclivity he never fully abandoned. According to Li, the thread that binds northern Chinese, or Han, across time is the atavistic shovel-shaped upper incisor, a single link in the “evolutionary series of the Mongolian race” from Peking Man to modern Han. But while physical characteristics serve as the most important or salient criteria for defining the Chinese minzu, significantly he now allows for impurity, even going so far as to

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<sup>406</sup> Li Chi, *The Beginnings of Chinese Civilization* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1957), 5.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.



suggest that the formation of the Chinese people came from the mixing of these early Neolithic “races.” But he again emphasizes that the principal component of the Chinese is the Mongoloid (elsewhere referred to as Yellow) race that developed east of the Ural Mountains. This last point anchors Chinese origins within Asia and prevents the Chinese people from becoming a mere younger offshoot of older foreign races.

### **Racial History of the Chinese People**

Over a decade later, in 1969, the *Journal of the China Society* featured a renewed discourse by Li Chi concerning “The Racial History of the Chinese People.” In it he made clear that the two principal criteria in identifying the Chinese *minzu* are once again both race and culture, but of these “the formation of the Chinese people in a cultural sense is richly documented both in the written records and the archaeological remains. As for the racial aspect, the data are only gradually accumulating.”<sup>410</sup> Li therefore attempted to shed some light on this opaque but, to him, paramount topic. By this time, however, due mainly to World War II and the horrors of holocaust, anthropometry had become associated with racism and Li was forced to rely on dated studies from the 1920s and 1930s as well as his own continuing work to formulate a theory on the biological component of the Chinese *minzu*. Though his sources remained obsolete and he reiterated many of his earlier ideas, even so this article also marks a clear transition in Li’s historiography, a break from earlier paradigms of discrete racial groups that transcend time to a more politically acceptable narrative that supported Chiang’s official line.

Still adhering to Blumenbach’s racial schema, Li believed that the Chinese exhibit physical traits “considered to be typical of the Mongoloid race, such as the hair structure,

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<sup>410</sup> Li Chi, “Racial History of the Chinese People” *Journal of the China Society* 6 (1969): 8.

the pigmentation, and the peculiar anatomy [shovel shape] of the incisor teeth.”<sup>411</sup> But the most apparent biological trait the Chinese share is a physiognomy, or composite of facial features. According to Li this includes almond-shaped eyes, Mongoloid folds, a flattish forehead, depressed nasal root, high cheek bone, and broad, flat face.<sup>412</sup> Most important of these “typical Mongoloid characteristics” are the almond eye, with “moderately or slightly sloping” eye slits, and the wide bizygomatic (cheekbone to cheekbone) measurement of the face.<sup>413</sup> As in his “Origins of the Chinese People” from two decades earlier, Li still subscribed to the climatic interpretation of environmental determinism as an explanation for this unique Chinese physiognomy:

The particular facial appearance of the Mongoloid people had its origin, according to this theory, in the necessity of fighting against the bitterly cold weather during the last glacial age, when a group of early Mongoloids were trapped in the dry cold region somewhere east of the Ural Mountains in northeastern Siberia. Man at that time had already invented both shelter and clothing which was sufficient to protect his body, but his face was by necessity exposed. This severe cold climate wiped out those who were physically unfit by the spread of pneumonia and sinus infection. Those who happen to be naturally protected in the sinus region and the eye region by a heavily padded layer of fatty substance [Mongoloid fold] and possessed smaller nasal apertures, were better qualified to survive in this kind of climate than their fellow creatures devoid of these natural gifts. The result of this severe struggle is the development of the Mongoloid physiognomy.<sup>414</sup>

Despite this and other pronouncements on the Chinese somatotype, Li was quick to acknowledge China’s great diversity: “The Chinese people are by no means homogeneous in their physical attributes; they vary from locality to locality.” For instance, northern Chinese are taller than southern Chinese; nasal indexes also differ strikingly from north to south. “One finds in Shandong as well as in Gansu

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<sup>411</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid., 3.

concentrations of long-headed people, while in central China, like Hunan, Hubei and certain parts of Fujian near the eastern coast, the local populations are quite broad-headed;” For Li these quantifiable biological differences are not only “anthropologically significant” but demonstrate “the great variability of the physical character of the living Chinese population.”<sup>415</sup>

But this paradigm still suggests, if not purity, at least predictability, with Chinese of a certain region collectively possessing a certain set of physical traits. Such a view again tends to conflate human and physical geography, with certain phenotypes endemic to a particular location. The Han, as one such subset of the Chinese people, supposedly remain concentrated in their homeland of the Central Plains. Once again Li cited Stevenson’s anthropometrical study of Chinese in the three core provinces of Henan, Hebei, and Shandong, “where ancient Chinese civilization had its roots.”<sup>416</sup> If, as it was believed, the Han continuously occupied this cradle of Chinese civilization, its population would then more fully exhibit the vestigial anatomy of the earliest Chinese. Han would therefore represent the Chinese archetype; others are merely thematic variations on an original.

He first examined data from Chinese heads at five temporal stages, or what he called the “Chinese cranial series,” beginning with the Paleolithic upper cave at Zhoukoudian, then the Neolithic prehistoric period, through the Shang dynasty, the Sui-Tang period, concluding with modern Northern Chinese.<sup>417</sup> This allowed him to trace the evolution of the Han from earliest homo sapiens in China to the present. Li then placed this linear development of the Chinese minzu within a broader, global context:

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<sup>415</sup> Ibid., 4. Minor changes in spelling to conform with current standards.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid., 7.

Employing the CRL, or Coefficient of Racial Likeness, he used another study to compare this Chinese series with surrounding “Oriental and non-Oriental races of Asia.” From this data Li concluded that the Chinese constitute a somatotype distinct from non-Mongoloid races, as one would expect, but also distinct from other “Oriental” or Mongoloid peoples such as northern Mongolians, Tibetans, Javanese, and Filipinos (although the Japanese were grouped with the Chinese).<sup>418</sup> One may then conclude that the Chinese are today distinguishable by physical traits. But when exactly did the Chinese emerge as a distinct biological group? Li suggests this happened only in the historical period.

The reader will recall that in 1953 Li noted marked differences in material culture, politics, and biology (cranial size) in the transition from prehistoric to historic China but greater continuity from Shang civilization onward. In 1969, while he depicted prehistoric China as racially and culturally heterogeneous, Li saw in historic China ever increasing homogeneity. Li himself had uncovered the many interred skeletons at Anyang, which upon examination suggested that a mix of racial groups existed in China from the earliest historical period.<sup>419</sup> Though he had earlier dismissed the non-Mongoloid races as simply foreign invaders executed or sacrificed, and therefore not representative of the Shang royal house, by 1969 he had revised his theory, suggesting that

in the latter part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC, north China was a meeting place for a variety of peoples: Eskimoid, Mongoloid, Australoid, Negroid, Caucasoid and a number of others....These identifications serve to indicate that the Chinese of this period were already in a melting pot.<sup>420</sup>

The idea of a “melting pot” marks a significant deviation from Li’s earlier narratives, especially those of the Nationalist period. Not only did ancient China have a racially

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<sup>418</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid., 9.

diverse population, as acknowledged previously, but Li now envisioned a great deal of historical intermixing among these peoples.

As evidence Li appealed to historical records that relate how repeated barbarian invasions resulted in a “process of hybridization among different clans” of China.<sup>421</sup>

The movement started with foreign invasions from the north, activating the momentum of the mass migration towards the south. The remnant indigenous people in north China, as a consequence, absorbed the invaders from the steppes, while emigrants from the Yellow River basin who crossed the Yangzi River and settled further south, mixed to some degree with the indigenous population of the southern territory.

So in the north the Han assimilated invaders while those Han who diffused outward from the Central Plains ended up mixing with locals. These migration patterns have occurred continuously over time, in both large and small waves. “One of the main results of this perpetual motion as evidenced by the continuous historical marches is the highly hybridized character of the Chinese of the present day, homogenized by a unique culture.”<sup>422</sup> For Li many different racial elements converged within China to produce the genetically “hybrid” Chinese people, who all share a single “culture” that unites and distinguishes them as a nation. And what is this homogenizing culture? According to Li, Confucianism “helped Chinese statesmen for more than 2,000 years to forge many racial elements into one people, and many local cultures into one civilization.”<sup>423</sup>

Li Chi’s 1969 narrative corroborates the official Republic of China version of national history. Chiang Kaishek, in *China’s Destiny*, had described how barbarian invasions precipitated migrations, and these migrations led to greater contact and intermixing of China’s various peoples: “As they [the clans] shared living space over the

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<sup>421</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid., 10.

past five thousand years, opportunities for contact were prevalent, and with the close proximity of their migrations and movements they continuously met and blended into a single nation (minzu).<sup>424</sup> But Chiang also explained that it was Han culture, with origins in the Central Plains, which facilitated the gradual homogenization of China's various peripheral clans: "When the Western Jin suffered the chaos of the five barbarians, the Hanzu moved southward, and the Yellow River basin became the dominion of the barbarians. But all these barbarian clans gradually became Hanified (Hanhua)."<sup>425</sup> He then recounts how with each successive barbarian invasion into the Central Plains, the Tartars, Mongols, and Manchus successively succumbed to Hanification. Thus "the Chinese nation, by virtue of its great and enduring culture, could assimilate the four surrounding clans."<sup>426</sup>

Certainly what Chiang referred to as Han culture could otherwise be called Confucianism. Despite the universalist application of his ideology, Confucius himself was born in present day Shandong province along the path of the Yellow River, and those works attributed either to him or his disciples depict a sage who looked to early antiquity, particularly the Zhou dynasty, as both a golden age and a standard to be emulated. Beginning with the Han dynasty subsequent political authorities, from their northern capitals, often used this ideology and its adherents to administer their empire. After completing the Northern Campaign and reuniting China under his government, Chiang himself had initiated a New Life Movement intended to imbibe Chinese society with both Confucian and military values. The culture of the Han would also serve as his means of governing China and assimilating peripheral groups.

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<sup>424</sup> Chiang, 2.

<sup>425</sup> Chiang, 3.

<sup>426</sup> Chiang, 5.

The prerequisite for being considered Chinese, it seems, was Hanification, but for both Chiang Kaishek and Li Chi assimilation entailed not only cultural but *biological* transformation. In Chiang's version the various clans, though separate and distinct, all descended from a common origin and are therefore of one race. Moreover the tendency to intermarry means that all clans share bloodlines. Likewise Li explained that although Confucianism defined the *culture* of the Chinese, north China's environment guided the process of natural selection that determined the Chinese somatotype. He had earlier described in explicit detail how this environment prefigured the form of the Chinese body, but now environment was also a means of homogenizing and therefore unifying the Chinese body politic, a process that occurred along with cultural homogenization.

Whereas earlier paradigms had emphasized divisions among China's peoples, particularly distinguishing Han from Manchus which enabled revolutionaries like Sun Yatsen to attack the Qing dynasty, Li now emphasized a separation of the modern Chinese nation from its racially and culturally heterogeneous ancestry. In speaking of environmentally-determined evolution, Li explained: "By continually moulding and remoulding the physical as well as the mental character of its inhabitants, this process developed a modern type of Chinese widely divergent from that of their Neolithic ancestors."<sup>427</sup> According to Li's 1969 narrative, there now exists a notable break between the prehistoric and historic peoples of China—in examining human remains, specimen of the historical period biologically resemble one another to a far greater extent than they resemble specimen of the prehistoric period. "Thus, in spite of the wide range of anthropometrical variations made apparent by recent surveys among the living inhabitants, a more or less convergent somatotype seems to be emerging in continental

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<sup>427</sup> Li, "Racial History," 10.

China.” The trend is toward greater and greater biological homogeneity due to intermixing and intermingling of peoples from China’s various regions. Due to this intermixing Li summarily condemns those who “insist on the existence of a pure Chinese stock,” concluding that “there has never been any ‘pure race’ on this planet of ours. This theory, in my opinion, can be fully confirmed by the racial history of the Chinese people.”<sup>428</sup> Despite its perpetuation of some earlier motifs, this article exhibits remarkable deviations from revolutionary narratives of racial purity and closer alignment with Chiang’s politically-motivated narrative of national uniformity as laid out in *China’s Destiny*.

### **A Final Word on the Chinese Race**

In 1977 Li published *Anyang*, a succinct narrative of the discovery and excavation of the Shang capital and the conclusions he had spent a lifetime formulating. In this Li offered what turned out to be his final thoughts on the matter of the Chinese race. The stark differences with his dissertation fifty-four years earlier reflect the evolution not simply of Li Chi’s ideas of the Chinese nation but, more broadly, changes in society and politics that occurred during that period.

In 1923 Li had defined the Han in part as “the silk-wearing, rice-eating, and city building Descendants of the Yellow Emperor.”<sup>429</sup> In 1977, however, Li referred to the Yellow Emperor and his purported role as father of the Chinese race, as well as to recorded accounts of the founder of Xia (and therefore the foundations of dynastic China),

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<sup>428</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>429</sup> Li Chi, *Formation of the Chinese People*, 275.



as “legends.” He did emphasize that modern scientific archaeology confirmed their legendary accomplishments in the very region they reputedly took place—northern China and the Yellow River valley—and his own archaeological work at Anyang lent credence to certain historical accounts, particularly that of Sima Qian who began his chronology with the Yellow Emperor; yet late in his career we find Li dismissing the popular view of a regal ascendant of the Han as both legendary and unscientific.<sup>430</sup>

And whereas Li had earlier subscribed to the idea perpetuated by revolutionaries that both Han and minorities transcend time as discrete groups, with not only distinct origins and lineages but homelands, histories, languages, cultures, and biology (and the tacit assumption that these would *remain* separate and distinct in the future), he gradually rejected purity in favor of the lately developed and politically sanctioned theory of assimilation. When the Institute of History and Philology created a special section for analysis of the skeletal remains collected at Anyang, the Institute invited the respected biometrician Wu Dingliang to lead the investigation. These samples certainly constituted a heterogeneous group, with Li still employing Blumenbach’s racial terms such as Mongoloid, Melanesian or Oceanic Negroid, Caucasoid, and Eskimoid. But unlike his earlier conclusions, in which he believed the non-Mongoloid specimen to be simply captured enemies or foreign invaders and therefore unrelated to the Chinese, late in his career he continued to emphasize that “in both anthropometrical measurements and morphological characteristics, the Anyang crania... indicate a mixed character that is no doubt the result of a *mixed race*.”<sup>431</sup> He went on to say that “from the very beginning, the north China plain was a meeting place of many different ethnic stocks and it is partly

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<sup>430</sup> Li Chi, *Anyang* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 161-2; Li Chi, *Zhongguo minzu zhi shi*.

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.*, 260. Emphasis added.

from the mixture of these groups that the early Chinese population was formed.” So now, at the end of Li’s life, Han lineage is no longer the neat genealogical line of descent from the Yellow Emperor as imagined by revolutionaries and accepted earlier by Li himself; rather, the revised narrative depicts Han ancestry as a complex amalgam of disparate races.

Despite late acceptance of the innovative melting pot analogy, Li still maintained a proclivity for continuity in adhering to the concept of a Chinese homeland in the central plains, and in adding the caveat “we must not forget that the dominant group among these stocks was indubitably the Mongoloid group.” As for the non-Mongoloid minorities: “Physical anthropologists have occasionally found traces of kinky hair in an anthropometric survey of the Chinese population, indicating the survival of some Papuans or Melanesians; but these are relatively rare indeed.” Similarly for the Caucasoid, as “it is still difficult to say how many of their genes could be definitely shown in the modern Chinese.”<sup>432</sup> So in the end Li allowed for assimilation of other races into the dominant Mongoloid group, a mixture which produced the Chinese somatotype. Since the Shang dynasty, or in other words during the historical period, the constant movement and migration of what had been distinct groups led to greater and greater homogenization of the Chinese people, producing the modern Chinese nation.

It seems that while racialism of the early twentieth century emphasized the eternally discrete nature of groups, the desire for national unity precipitated by the Japanese threat and the backlash against racism since WWII led to the other extreme, suggesting that purity does not exist—instead mixing is constant and absolute. Li’s

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<sup>432</sup> Ibid., 264.

revisions follow Chiang Kaishek's official narrative and parallel developments in the mainland PRC to be discussed in the chapter following.

**FEI XIAOTONG AND THE CHINESE SNOWBALL:  
OFFICIAL NARRATIVES OF HAN AND THE CHINESE NATION IN THE PRC  
AND BEYOND, 1950-2007**

**Schism: The End of Nationalist Archaeology**

Japan's surrender in August of 1945 brought an end to both WWII and the Japanese presence in China, allowing the longstanding rivalry between the Nationalists and Communists to escalate into full blown civil war. By 1948, as Red Army forces overwhelmed Chiang's troops, the ROC government, including the Academia Sinica, began a mass evacuation to Taiwan. Scholars now faced the weighty decision of whether to retreat with Chiang's government or to stay in "liberated" China under Mao's regime.

While Li Chi and Ling Chunsheng chose to follow the Nationalist government into exile across the strait, many of their students and colleagues remained behind: Liang Siyong, Guo Baojun, Wu Jinding, and Xia Nai stayed in the mainland to guide archaeology under the Peoples Republic of China.<sup>433</sup> Mao's new regime founded the Chinese Academy of Sciences,<sup>434</sup> a PRC equivalent of the ROC Academia Sinica, each the ranking think tank for its respective government. Like Li Chi's Archaeology Section now in Taiwan, in 1950 CAS formed its own Institute of Archaeology to preside over that

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<sup>433</sup> Xia Nai, who had been a member of the Academia Sinica's Archaeology Section, was entrusted with overseeing the shipment of a load of items and personnel to Taiwan, but intercepted the ship in Nanjing harbor. Because Guo Baojun was a passenger on that ship, Xia actually made Guo's decision for him (Hsu Cho-yun, personal communication February 2007).

<sup>434</sup> 中国科学院, later divided into natural sciences and social sciences, the latter called Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 中国社会科学院. For a detailed history of institutions and scholars see Gregory Guldin, *The Saga of Anthropology in China* (Armonk: ME Sharpe, 1994).

aspect of the national biography project for the PRC.<sup>435</sup> In these first decades, under Li Chi's protégés, mainland archaeology followed the conventional sinocentric (Hancentric) focus on the Yellow River region tracing the roots of the Han even as it substantiated Marxist stage theory.

Early Marxist historians like Guo Moruo had established a new interpretation of Chinese history relying on Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, a work which was in part inspired by Lewis Henry Morgan's theories of society's origins and evolution as found in *Ancient Society*. While these foreign texts served as Guo's theoretical base he cited Chinese classical records as source material and, to a lesser extent, archaeological findings in order to trace China's social development through six universal historical stages, beginning with primitive communalism, then slave society, feudalism, capitalism, socialism, and finally communism. The first stage in this linear progression—that of primitive communalism—is characterized by matriarchy, clan society, and pronounced lack of both social classes and personal property. For Guo this coincided with the Stone and Bronze Ages, persisting through the Shang dynasty until the Western Zhou when the Iron Age precipitated the first great “social revolution”: iron made farming and animal husbandry a man's business, relegating women to a position of dependency and eventually slavery. This development ushered in patriarchal society, the separation of social classes, the rise of emperors, kings, and states, and personal possessions. Thus begins civilization and the practice of man extorting man, with only

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<sup>435</sup> For discussion on the politicization of archaeology in China see Lothar Von Falkenhausen, “On the Historiographical Orientation of Chinese Archaeology,” *Antiquity* 67 (1993): 839-849; and Lothar Von Falkenhausen, “The Regionalist Paradigm in Chinese Archaeology” in Kohl, Philip L. and Clare Fawcett, eds. *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). On the institutional system of Chinese archaeology in this period see Cheng Te-K'un, “Archaeology in Communist China,” *China Quarterly* 23 (1965): 67-77.

two classes in existence—slaves and those who owned them, the upper class. This slave society arose from the subjugation of the weak and susceptible in one’s own group, including women, and from conquering other ethnic groups.

Only after the Eastern Zhou did China truly enter the feudal stage, where it remained for over two thousand years. During that protracted time slaves continually revolted against and overthrew dynasties, but the shrewd simply set up new dynasties and the means of production essentially remained unchanged. The Taiping Revolution was among these failed slave uprisings, but finally the “capitalist revolution” of 1911 simultaneously ended the dynastic cycle and the feudal stage in China, ushering in the age of capitalism. The victory of Mao’s Red Army and subsequent establishment of the PRC heralded the socialist epoch and the inexorable march toward society’s final utopian state, that of true communism.<sup>436</sup> Thus scholars like Guo applied the universalities of Marxist stage theory to the particularities of China’s past. Establishment of the PRC, under which this Marxist interpretation of Chinese history became orthodox, ensured that this diachronic paradigm served as the metanarrative for historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists alike.

As discussed in chapter one, in the revolutionary period classical texts and imperial records became the history of modern Han. Li Chi’s excavation of Anyang proved the existence of the Shang dynasty, which both silenced skeptics who had served as a critical check to nationalist imaginings and enabled the Han to trace their roots back to China’s earliest historical period. Li Chi and others then extended the search to

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<sup>436</sup> Guo Moruo, *Zhongguo gudai shehui yanjiu*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1960). The first edition was published in 1930 but remained staple reading for PRC scholars.

China's prehistory, seeking to link Longshan and Yangshao cultures and even Peking Man to an established literate Han civilization.

Li's colleagues and students who remained in the PRC continued his legacy, illustrated most clearly in the case of the Xia dynasty. In 1959 archaeologists discovered a settlement at Yanshi that they claim was the capital of the Xia dynasty, a link between the prehistoric Longshan culture and the historic Shang dynasty. The ongoing debate about whether this site in fact represents the Xia dynasty referenced in certain histories is less compelling than the PRC insistence on working this discovery into the national narrative. The Chinese state sponsored and continues to endorse a largely discredited Chronology Project<sup>437</sup> that linked the Xia, Shang, and Zhou civilizations into a neat linear series which, when linked to later dynasties, culminates with the PRC itself.<sup>438</sup> Ultimately this is an exercise in self-aggrandizement and political legitimization, pushing the current regime's roots further into China's remote past. Such a tactic of course lacked originality; each new regime, once established, commissioned its own official history by which it effectively grafted itself onto the earlier dynasties. But as Barry Sautman and others have noted, PRC scholars in fact took Li's search for continuity to its extreme, arguing that Chinese civilization predates any others and even that the earliest hominids originated in China.<sup>439</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> 夏商周断代工程

<sup>438</sup> For introductions to the Chronology Project, see Li Xueqin, "The Xia-Shang-Zhou Chronology Project," *Journal of East Asian Archaeology* 4 (2002): 321-333; Lee Yun kuen, "Building the Chronology of Early Chinese History" *Asian Perspectives: The Journal of Archaeology for Asia and the Pacific* v. 41, no. 1 (2002): 15-42. For discussions of the project flaws see Douglas J. Keenan, "Astro-historiographic Chronologies of Early China are Unfounded," *East Asian History* 23 (2002): 61-68; Douglas J. Keenan, "Defense of Planetary Conjunctions for Early Chinese Chronology is Unmerited," *Journal of Astronomical History and Heritage* 10 (2007): 142-147.

<sup>439</sup> Barry Sautman, "Peking Man and the Politics of Paleoanthropological Nationalism in China," *Journal of Asian Studies* 60, no. 1 (2001): 104.

Yet in spite of their intellectual debt to the father of Chinese archaeology,<sup>440</sup> in the 1950s the preeminent PRC archaeology journal, *Kaogu tongxun* (now *Kaogu*), issued a series of criticisms roundly denouncing Li Chi and his methods as tools of capitalism and imperialism.<sup>441</sup> Foreigners in the early twentieth century had suggested that China lacked an indigenous culture—their imperialist agenda instead led them to postulate that Western culture *diffused* into China, which relegated the Chinese to a position of inferiority as a mere offshoot of Western civilization. These articles included several quotes from Li as proof that he also believed Chinese culture originated in the West, summarily placing him in the capitalist and imperialist camp (he had, after all, received his training in the United States). The reader will recognize from previous chapters the absurdity of this accusation, yet due to his ties with the US and the Guomindang Li and his works remained anathema in the mainland for decades. During the Cultural Revolution archaeologists were subject to harassment for teaching from Li's texts. One scholar vividly recalls being forced to wear a dunce cap and stand in front of a jeering crowd as he hung his head and withstood verbal abuse from his colleagues. His house was raided and turned upside down, frightening his family and damaging personal possessions.<sup>442</sup> Li of course was safely in Taiwan by then, but he was not ignorant of the smear campaign. In 1962, perhaps in response to such radical politicization of himself, Li referred to the PRC as “a totalitarian regime which has manpower to spare and uses archaeology as an effective political instrument.”<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>440</sup> See Clayton D. Brown, “Li Ji: Father of Chinese Archaeology” *Orientalism* v. 39, no. 3 (April 2008) for argumentation substantiating this statement.

<sup>441</sup> See for instance *Kao gu tong xun* 4 (1955): 68-9; *Kaogu* 1 (1959): 14-17.

<sup>442</sup> Zou Heng, professor emeritus of archaeology at Peking University, from an interview in September 2004.

<sup>443</sup> Chang Kwang-chih, *The Archaeology of Ancient China*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), x.



It was not until the post-Mao reform era that Li received posthumous exoneration in the same publication that had sullied his legacy, first when Xia Nai contributed an article acknowledging his mentor's role in the early history of Chinese archaeology<sup>444</sup> and then in 1982, when the journal featured a piece on "Li Chi's Life and Academic Contribution."<sup>445</sup> Following the rehabilitation of Li's reputation (along with millions of other "rightists") his son, who had remained in China since 1949, began authoring books and articles culminating in a five volume collection of Li Chi's works,<sup>446</sup> all published in the mainland.<sup>447</sup> While during his lifetime Li felt betrayed in the way former friends, colleagues, and students treated his life's work, in his absence from the mainland he certainly escaped far worse.

### **Ethnic Identification Work in the PRC<sup>448</sup>**

In the wake of war the ROC government, as a member of the victorious Allies, stationed representatives in occupied Japan. Li Chi served as a cultural adviser to this Chinese delegation, his duty being the location and repatriation of important cultural relics plundered by the Japanese during their occupation of China (including a failed search for the Peking Man skull).<sup>449</sup> Wu Wenzao's Qinghua University colleague, who directed the group, appointed Wu to head the commission's political organization and in

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<sup>444</sup> Xia Nai, "Wusi yundong he Zhongguo jindai kaoguxue de xingqi," *Kaogu* no. 3 (1979): 193-196.

<sup>445</sup> *Kaogu* no. 3 (1982): 334-5.

<sup>446</sup> Li Ji, *Li Ji Wenji* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2006).

<sup>447</sup> Despite exculpation, a stigma still endures. One scholar, in discussing Li's role in this history, never let his eyes stray from his office door as he whispered that one must still be careful when referring to Li Chi. Another scholar explained that party authorities scrapped a planned archaeology scholarship in Li's name due to "political complications."

<sup>448</sup> 民族识别

<sup>449</sup> Li Guangmo, "Li Ji Zhuanlüe" from *Zhongguo xian dai she hui ke xue jia zhuan lue* (Shanxi Renmin Chubanshe, 1983), 162.

this capacity he served as adviser for the Chinese delegation to the Allied committee on Japan. As a noted sociologist, however, his duties in Japan also included understanding both US army occupation policy and Japanese society generally. By the time of the establishment of the People's Republic of China in October of 1949 Li had already rejoined the Nationalist government in Taiwan, but Wu was still working as their representative in Japan. After careful deliberation he decided to resign his post and sever ties with the ROC government, but because of his previous affiliation with the Guomindang he had serious misgivings about returning home (and for good reason, as illustrated in Li Chi's case). Therefore, relying on a Singapore newspaper reporter ID, he remained in Tokyo for a full year waiting for events in the mainland to unfold. In fall of 1951, though extended an invitation to teach sociology at Yale, he returned to New China to rejoin former students Fei Xiaotong and Lin Yaohua in what became the monumental "ethnic identification project."<sup>450</sup>

Due to official repudiation of the disciplines of anthropology and sociology (the former because of ties to Western imperialism, and the latter because it was conflated with socialism) the new government closed down academic departments and assigned veteran social scientists like Wu, Fei and Lin to the task of identifying minorities, formulating minority policy, and training minority cadres.<sup>451</sup> Most of this work was concentrated at the Central Institute for Nationalities (CIN), a latter incarnation of the pre-liberation Yan'an Institute for Nationalities.<sup>452</sup> As the ranking state body for minority research, CIN, with Fei as deputy director, advised the State Ethnic Affairs

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<sup>450</sup> Wu Wenzao, "Wu Wenzao zizhuan" in *Zhongguo dangdai shehui kexuejia* (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1986).

<sup>451</sup> One of the earliest firsthand accounts of is found in Gene Cooper, "An Interview with Chinese Anthropologists," *Current Anthropology* 14:4 (1973): 482.

<sup>452</sup> 中央民族学院. In 1993 CIN became the Central University for Nationalities (CUN).

Commission<sup>453</sup> on minority policy while presiding over a hierarchy of provincial and local branches throughout the country much like the Institute of Archaeology presided over a hierarchy of archaeology institutions throughout China.<sup>454</sup>

After several years of fieldwork this corps of scholars, and hence the state itself, came to recognize a total of fifty-six ethnic groups or “nationalities,” namely the Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Hui, and Tibetan already well established by revolutionaries and the ROC, but now additionally the Uyгур, Miao, Yi, Zhuang, Bouyei, Korean, Dong, Yao, Bai, Tujia, Hani, Kazak, Dai, Li, Lisu, Va, She, Lahu, Shui, Dongxiang, Naxi, Jingpo, Kirgiz, Tu, Daur, Mulam, Qiang, Blang, Salar, Maonan, Gelo, Xibe, Achang, Pumi, Tajik, Nu, Ozbek, Russian, Ewenki, Deang, Bonan, Yugur, Jing, Tatar, Drung, Oroqen, Hezhen, Moinba, Lhoba, Jino, and Gaoshan (Taiwan’s “mountain people”).<sup>455</sup> Today every citizen of the PRC identifies with one of these fifty-five minority groups or, by default, with the Han.<sup>456</sup>

Once all nationalities were identified, in 1956 Fei Xiaotong found himself “in charge of supervising the task of studying the social development of the national minorities of China organized by the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress.”<sup>457</sup> It was emphasized that this national minorities work in New China differed from anthropology, the instrument of Western imperialism. The Marxist interpretation of

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<sup>453</sup> 国家民族事务委员会

<sup>454</sup> A. Tom Grunfeld, “In Search of Equality: Relations Between China’s Ethnic Minorities and the Majority Han,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 17 (1985): 60.

<sup>455</sup> *White Papers of the Chinese Government* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2000).

<sup>456</sup> Rather than assuming that this taxonomy represents something completely new it should be considered an extension of earlier work—the latest development in an ongoing national construction project. See Thomas S. Mullaney, “Ethnic Classification Writ Large: The 1954 Yunnan Province Ethnic Classification Project and its Foundations in Republican-Era Taxonomic Thought,” *China Information* 18.2 (2004): 207-241; Xie Shizhong and Sun Baogang, eds., *Renleixue yanjiu* (Taipei: Nantian Shuju, 1989).

<sup>457</sup> Fei Hsiao Tung, *Toward a People’s Anthropology* (Beijing: New World Press, 1981), iii.

history indeed promoted a view that divided Chinese society into oppressor and oppressed, and minorities typically fell into the latter category. As Fei explained:

Despite their different conditions, all the nationalities have always been under the government of the common power prevailing over China. The unitary state of China, built with common labor by her different nationalities, was for a long time under the rule of reactionary classes which pursued a policy of national oppression. Emperors, kings, warlords, and the Kuomintang, a reactionary government who ruled over China for centuries, adopted oppressive policies against these national minorities to obstruct their development.<sup>458</sup>

In the most recent era, “before liberation, the reactionary Kuomintang government practiced national oppression and pursued a policy of forced assimilation of the minorities. The latter were forced to speak and use the Han language.”<sup>459</sup> Such an attitude was condemned as “Han chauvinism”<sup>460</sup> and, although it persisted under the PRC, the communist party had supposedly established a system that would wipe out such inequity.

But in their zeal to right past wrongs the Party ironically furthered social inequality that favored the Han. As minorities “remained more backward economically than the Hans, and some of the others remained in still more primitive stages of social development,” Han became the vanguard of social evolution—those who had progressed farthest along the evolutionary trajectory while minority tribes remained stuck in the earlier stages of development, in need of Han patronage, leadership, and direction.<sup>461</sup> Thus “the Hans, with the largest population and relatively more advanced economy and culture, have played an important role in propelling the societies of the minorities forward.” It seems the Han remained not only a pinnacle and standard for minorities to

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<sup>458</sup> Fei, *Toward a People's Anthropology*, 49.

<sup>459</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>460</sup> 大汉主义

<sup>461</sup> Fei, *Toward a People's Anthropology*, 31.

follow but now the PRC had gone so far as to transform them into saviors of the Chinese nation—hardly the socialist egalitarianism proclaimed by the Party.

But still there were no studies of the Han nationality in these years—only minorities were subject to so-called “nationality studies,” and these were defined *against* a putative Han identity, both culturally and linguistically (biological differences, as mentioned in the previous chapter, were no longer regarded). In the Republican period sociologists in China (and not all were Chinese scholars) had engaged in community studies, a movement Wu Wenzao in particular had fostered.<sup>462</sup> These typically involved discrete communities that happened to be Han but did not attempt any holistic research on the Han as an ethnic group. Now, however, all their earlier works, whether sociological or ethnographic, were dismissed as “old books” produced by their previous bourgeois selves.<sup>463</sup> Because sociology and anthropology did not officially exist, and belief in the Han served Party interests, critical examination of the Han would have been ideologically heterodox and therefore dangerous; any possibility of such inquiry would have to await post-Mao reforms.

## **II. INVERSION: ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE CENTER AND ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE PERIPHERY**

For seven years, until the autumn of 1957, Fei assisted the state in studying China’s minorities. His work came to an abrupt halt with the anti-rightist campaign, the same movement that ensnared countless other intellectuals as dissidents and

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<sup>462</sup> For Fei’s account of this history see Fei Xiaotong, “Minzu yanjiu: Jianshu wo di minzu yanjiu jingli yu sikao” in Fei Xiaotong, ed., *Zhonghua minzu duoyuan yiti geju* (Beijing: CUN, 1999), 1-2.

<sup>463</sup> Cooper, 480.

counterrevolutionaries. Lin Yaohua, a long time friend and colleague, publicly denounced him in a particularly scathing letter.<sup>464</sup> Of all this Fei related:

In 1957 when some friends proposed rehabilitating sociology in China I said a few words in concurrence. At that time, the country was in the middle of an exaggerated struggle against Rightists and many veterans in Chinese sociological circles were wrongly branded as bourgeois Rightists. I was not excluded...My life in the years from 1957 to 1979, including the ten years of the so-called “cultural revolution” was inevitably very abnormal. I could no longer carry on social studies as an academician.<sup>465</sup>

During those years Fei kept a low profile and companied with Wu Wenzao and Pan Guangdan, the three of them studying and publishing under pseudonyms when able. During the Cultural Revolution they were again targeted and sent to an infamous May Fourth Cadre School for labor reform. Fei confessed that he accomplished little in these intervening years, apparently too occupied with menial labor such as steaming buns for his work unit to devote himself to intellectual pursuits.<sup>466</sup>

### **The Han Snowball: Fei Xiaotong and the Revised Narrative, 1978-2005**

After the death of Mao and the trial of the Gang of Four, millions who had been targeted as “rightists” or “counterrevolutionaries” shed their labels and, if they had survived the purge, attempted to reintegrate into society. The proscription against sociology and anthropology was also lifted. Fei recalled that “after the calamitous decade, I was assigned in 1978 to re-establish sociological studies in the Academy of Social

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<sup>464</sup> R. David Arkush, *Fei Xiaotong and Sociology in Revolutionary China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

<sup>465</sup> Fei, *Toward a People's Anthropology*, iii-iv.

<sup>466</sup> From an interview with Huang Shuping, a close colleague of Fei and professor emeritus at Zhongshan University, November 2006. She was part of Fei's work unit at the May Seventh Cadre School.

Sciences,” a branch of CAS.<sup>467</sup> That same year the central government re-established the National Ethnic Affairs Commission<sup>468</sup> and appointed an aging Fei Xiaotong to spearhead that effort. He also served as vice president of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Congress, sat as a judge at the trial of the Gang of Four, and in and in 1979 it was announced that Fei would head the newly formed Chinese Society of Sociology. Apparently among his colleagues it was often asked whether Fei was a scholar or politician.<sup>469</sup> In 1988 he said of himself: “I have become a high-level promoter. I analyze what is going on, describe it, and advise those who control policy.”<sup>470</sup> Given Fei’s peerless academic and political influence it comes as no surprise that his narrative of the Han became orthodox.

Since its introduction into China by Cai Yuanpei half a century earlier ethnology had examined only minority groups, and as late as 1972 Western observers reported: “As far as we were able to determine, no cultural anthropological studies per se are being done on Han Chinese peoples.”<sup>471</sup> Yet today the Chinese Ethnology Society has formed an ancillary Han Research Society,<sup>472</sup> and the anthropologist Xu Jieshun, now China’s foremost authority on the Han, has published a prolific number of anthropological analyses of the majority ethnic group. But it was China’s most famous social scientist, Fei Xiaotong, who presided over the rehabilitation of sociology and anthropology in the reform era and directed efforts toward revision of the national narrative, eventually paving the way for Han studies in China.

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<sup>467</sup> Fei, *Toward a People’s Anthropology*, iv.

<sup>468</sup> 国家民族事务委员会

<sup>469</sup> Chien Chiao, “Fei Xiaotong: A Personal Appraisal” in Chie Nakane and Chien Chiao, eds., *Home Bound: Studies in East Asian Society* (Tokyo: The Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1992), 21.

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*, 656.

<sup>471</sup> Cooper, 481.

<sup>472</sup> 中国民族学会汉民族研究会

The new paradigm is easily summarized by Fei's pithy phrase *duoyuan yiti*, now a popularized slogan which literally means "many sources one body," or from plurality to unity—*e pluribus unum*.<sup>473</sup> For Fei, the Han constitute an absorptive center, a core that over time assimilated outside groups and grew to become the Chinese nation, *zhonghua minzu*, coterminous with the present state boundaries. His first exposition on the subject occurred in 1988 when he was invited to present the Tanner Lecture on Human Values at the University of Hong Kong. In this initial introduction to his theory he relied heavily on archaeology, classical texts, and ethnology in tracing the history of the Han from their prehistoric origins within China to the present day.<sup>474</sup>

"Three thousand years [BC], a nucleus assembled in the middle reaches of the Yellow River and gradually melded together a number of national groups. Known as Huaxia, this nucleus attracted all groups around it, growing larger like a snowball." Note first that Fei no longer traces Han lineage to the Yellow Emperor, now a symbol of "Han chauvinism." Instead he invokes an ancient ethnonym referring to the peoples of the Yellow River valley—Hua derived from Mount Hua, one of the five sacred mountains in China; and Xia from the society that occupied that region just prior to advent of historical records.<sup>475</sup> Although Fei did not coin the term, following his invocation Huaxia replaced the Yellow Emperor in national genesis narratives.

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<sup>473</sup> 多元一体. He invented the phrase while on summer vacation following the Tanner lecture, as he reformulated the original English language lecture into a Chinese article. See his introduction to *Zhonghua mi zu duoyuan yiti geju*.

<sup>474</sup> "Plurality and Unity in the Configuration of the Chinese People," a lecture delivered at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1988. The original English version is available at <http://www.tannerlectures.utah.edu/lectures/fei90.pdf>, while a Chinese translation appeared in *北京大学学报* 4 (1989): 1-19. The fullest treatment can be found in the more recent volume: Fei Xiaotong, ed., *Zhonghua min zu duo yuan yi ti ge ju* (Beijing: Zhong yang min zu da xue chu ban she, 1999).

<sup>475</sup> For an explication of Huaxia see Wang Zengyong, *Huaxia wenhua yuanliukao* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2005).



As the Huaxia snowball rolled along, “The ethnic entity of the Hans grew steadily by their absorption of other groups”<sup>476</sup> until “the unification of central China by the Qin empire was the last step which completed the development of the Han community into an ethnic or national entity.”<sup>477</sup> “This meant the economic, political, and cultural unification of the Chinese as a nation” over two thousand years ago.<sup>478</sup> Whereas Sun Yat-sen had wished in the future to unite all races “in a single cultural and political whole,”<sup>479</sup> Fei believed that this had been accomplished long ago by the Qin dynasty, after which the Han snowball continued to expand: “China was a great melting pot with the Hans as the nucleus during the six centuries from Tang through Song,”<sup>480</sup> and “the Mongols and Manchus merged with the Hans in large numbers after the fall of their empires.”<sup>481</sup> This of course was the direction Li Chi seemed to be headed—the melting pot idea taken to its conclusion.

Fei then asks: “What, then, has made the Hans a nucleus with such centripetal force? The main factor, in my view, has been their agricultural economy.”<sup>482</sup> Fei in fact frequently refers to the Han as peasants, and “even now the small-farmer economy remains the economic basis for the Hans” and therefore of China.<sup>483</sup> Fei’s emphasis on peasants comes as no surprise given his classical studies like *Peasant Life in China* and *From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society*. Li Chi had also defined the Han by pastoral lifestyle, but here Fei, in Marxist idiom, defines the Han by class, a tactic that meshes well with Mao’s exaltation of the rural peasants.

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<sup>476</sup> Fei, *Plurality and Unity*, 168.

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>479</sup> Sun Yat-sen, *Memoirs of a Chinese Revolutionary* (Taipei: China Cultural Service, 1953), 180.

<sup>480</sup> Fei, 187.

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>482</sup> Fei, 214.

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

Fei's snowball simile transcended racial or ethnic divisions by literalizing the policy of *minzu tuanjie* (ethnic entwinement), a kind of official nationalism by which one's identification with the state would supersede ethnic identity, which was in any case blurred. But the idea that the Han constitute the heart of the Chinese nation smacks of ethnocentrism, so he tempered this by explaining:

Hans during their process of development have absorbed a lot from other groups, and meanwhile they have also contributed to these other groups. As far as biological factors and blood lineage are concerned, the Chinese people as a whole have been mixing and integrating throughout their history. We cannot say that one nationality is pure in terms of blood lineage.<sup>484</sup>

Fei's suggestion that all Chinese share the same blood harkens back to Chiang's narrative in *China's Destiny* in which he attempted to make a single race of all China's citizens regardless of "clan," or in this case "ethnic," affiliation. Again this represents a departure from revolutionaries who earlier assumed that the Han and barbarians transcend time as discrete races or lineage groups. Instead Fei depicts a constant intermingling of races, with no references to biology, Mongoloid physiognomy, or lineage to the Yellow Emperor.

Fei's narrative further differs from earlier paradigms in suggesting that the origins of the Chinese people are "pluralistic and indigenous." It is pluralistic because *zhongyuan*, the cradle of Chinese civilization, is now *a* center where the Chinese originated, not *the* center. Fei includes the periphery, areas such as Taiwan, Manchuria, and Yunnan, as sites for the dawn of early Chinese.<sup>485</sup> Fei also adheres to the "indigenous" nature of Chinese civilization, maintaining that "China is one of the world's centers where mankind

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<sup>484</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid., 171.

originated.”<sup>486</sup> Fei’s insistence on Chinese civilization’s formation and development in isolation, entirely independent of foreign (read Western) influences, corroborates the PRC’s official biography of the nation<sup>487</sup> but also stands in stark contrast to Li Chi’s diffusionism. And where Fei’s definition of “Chinese” includes all fifty-six ethnic groups, Li’s concept of Chinese was narrower – the Descendants of the Yellow Emperor who became the Han.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of Fei Xiaotong’s ideas. Western scholars have drawn from Fei’s several English language works for decades. His focus on the Han heavily influenced Taiwan’s foremost ethnologist, whose lengthy career guided the discipline there and gradually turned attention from the island’s aborigines to the Han.<sup>488</sup> But of course Fei exerted a marked influence in the PRC, where his narrative remains orthodox.<sup>489</sup>

### **III. THE HAN IN OFFICIAL NARRATIVES**

#### **A United Multi-Ethnic Nation: White Papers and the Official PRC Narrative**

Although a century ago the story of the Han began with the Yellow Emperor, subsequent revisions gradually erased him from the narrative in the PRC. In fact, Han as race—the idea of the Han as a pure lineage or biological construct—is gone. The five races vanished, replaced by fifty-six ethnic groups. The Han are still the majority, but

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<sup>486</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>487</sup> See Sautman, “Peking Man.”

<sup>488</sup> Li Yih-yuan, from a personal interview March 2005.

<sup>489</sup> Two prominent PRC anthropologists who wish to remain anonymous explained that although not all scholars agree with Fei’s narrative, they fear their colleagues would not tolerate a dissenting opinion.

now quantifiable—91.96% among a total national population of 1.2 billion, with the rest collectively referred to as “minorities” (since only ethnologists can distinguish among the other fifty-five ethnic groups).

Ironically, despite the bafflingly complex taxonomy, the Chinese are officially “united.” Today the PRC’s *White Papers*, a kind of state-of-the-union report, reflects the influence of Fei’s *duoyuan yiti* narrative. In both cases an almost paranoid stress on solidarity prevails, with some form of the word ‘unity’ appearing no fewer than twenty-one times in the three-page passage on ethnic groups from the *White Papers*.<sup>490</sup> According to this document: “China as a united multi-ethnic country was created by the Qin Dynasty and consolidated and developed by the Han Dynasty.” It was during the Han dynasty that “the most populous ethnic group in the world, the Han, emerged.” Since then the unity of the Chinese people came of historical interaction—they “migrated and mingled,” with “economic and cultural exchanges” that brought them together in “interdependence” and “cooperation.” Due to these interconnections, “all ethnic groups in China have shared common destiny and interests in their long historical development, creating a strong force of affinity and cohesion.” After a thorough retelling of Chinese history, one can only conclude that “unity has always been the mainstream in the development of Chinese history.” Fei’s account generated two decades earlier we find even the wording strikingly similar: “Some 200 years before Christ Qingshihuang (Chinshihuang), the first emperor, accomplished the historic mission of founding a centralized, unified state. This marked a great beginning. Since then, China’s various nationalities have lived together in a unitary country. This has improved unity, promoted

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<sup>490</sup> See *White Papers of the Chinese Government* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2000); or <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/4/index.htm>

growth and is in the vital interest of the people of all China's nationalities. National solidarity and unification of the country have been the main current in China's history."<sup>491</sup> But again, just as the PRC's current version of history draws from Fei's account, Fei himself seems to have revised Chiang Kai-shek's wartime narrative, although acknowledgment of any such connections would have been tantamount to political suicide.

According to the PRC's official autobiography, the Party not only perpetuated this legacy of unity but superceded it by providing *equality* for all ethnic groups. This recent revision in fact writes equality into the story, since now *all* groups, including minorities, participated equally in creating Chinese civilization. While such a narrative turn does have precedents, beginning with Sun Yat-sen's idea of *wuzu gonghe* and including Chiang Kai-shek's trope from *China's Destiny*, it also has a contemporary analogue in the field of archaeology. Lothar von Falkenhausen has recently traced the development of an "interaction sphere" theory, whereby all regions and peoples found within China contributed to the making of Chinese civilization and are now considered indispensable constituents of the nation.<sup>492</sup> The new formula involved archaeology in the periphery (i.e. outside the central plains) to explain how minority peoples contributed to the formation of the Chinese nation. The inclusionism of this theory, which developed gradually in the works of archaeologists Su Bingqi and K.C. Chang, appealed to the PRC state for its theoretical reining in of the margins. But this interaction sphere had well-defined borders coterminous with the state. The idea that any historical influences may have originated

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<sup>491</sup> Fei, *Toward a People's Anthropology*, 20.

<sup>492</sup> See Lothar Von Falkenhausen, "The Regionalist Paradigm in Chinese Archaeology," from Kohl, Philip L. and Clare Fawcett, *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology* (Cambridge University Press, 1995).

outside of the PRC's contemporary borders was not acceptable to the PRC's national narrative. China as a melting pot received official sanction, but the PRC only acknowledged domestic, not international, melting.<sup>493</sup>

Still, despite attempts to overcome the traditional core/periphery division through inclusion and equality, ironically the Han, as the primordial core of the Chinese nation, remain the crux of the PRC narrative to which the minorities are dependent for national cohesion.

### **Alternative Views: Official Narratives of Han in the Chinese Periphery**

Having examined the history behind the PRC's official narrative for the Han we may now examine counter-narratives generated by other Chinese political regimes. If we accept the thesis of the preceding chapters—namely, that political, social, and heuristic elements determine one's view of the Han in a particular context—then it would stand to reason that Chinese outside of the PRC in differing circumstances would naturally view the Han in a different light. In fact, an examination of the official status of Han in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao, all of which until very recently operated as Chinese communities politically independent of the PRC, confirms this thesis. Despite PRC claims to these regions as inalienable parts of one China, the residents of all four communities subscribe to different visions of the Chinese nation.

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<sup>493</sup> Sautman, 103.

## **Macao**

Macao, a small peninsula and surrounding islands just west of Hong Kong in the Pearl River delta, became part of the Peoples Republic of China in 1999. This transition brought to a celebrated close Portuguese administration of Macao, the last and longest-running foreign possession in China. Over four and a half centuries earlier Portuguese traders had begun arriving in Macao and by 1557 they had established a permanent settlement, erecting European-style houses and administrative buildings that remain a part of Macao's architectural landscape to this day. In the seventeenth century Portugal began leasing the territory and in 1887, as part of the infamous "unequal treaties" forced on China by the Western nations, the Beijing Treaty ceded to Portugal the right to perpetual occupation and government of Macao. A full century later Portugal and China began negotiating the transfer of Macao's sovereignty back to Chinese jurisdiction, which occurred on December 20<sup>th</sup> of 1999.<sup>494</sup>

Nearly all residents of Macao consider themselves Chinese, but given the history outlined above one would correctly assume that the colonial legacy has not disappeared. Even today, nearly a decade after transition, Portuguese remains the official language in Macao (though Chinese was added at reversion) and its residents use the pataca rather than Chinese RMB. Macao, like Hong Kong, is administered by Beijing as a Special Administrative Region which allows it to retain autonomy from Beijing. The upshot of this current system is that, although Macao and Hong Kong now belong to the PRC, they have yet to adopt the official PRC definition of the Han; in fact, there is no identification with or recognition of Han at all in either region, whether officially or popularly. A look

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<sup>494</sup> Jill McGivering and David Hartung, *Macao Remembers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

at Macao's most recent census report provides insights into the former while the latter, popular conceptions of Han, are explored in the chapter following.

Every five years the Documentation and Information Centre (DSEC) of Macao's Statistics and Census Service conducts and issues an official census report, the results of which appear in a trilingual (Portuguese, Chinese, and English) publication. In the most recent of these reports, the *Global Results of By-census* from 2007, the government of Macao SAR breaks its population down into *zuyi* or descent groups,<sup>495</sup> a term rendered into English as "ethnicity."<sup>496</sup> The vast majority of Macao's residents, 94.3% to be precise, are designated "pure Huayi."<sup>497</sup> Although the official translation of Huayi is simply "Chinese,"<sup>498</sup> a more literal translation of Huayi would be "those of Hua descent" or Chinese in the broadest sense (as opposed to the more narrow Han, who constitute the core of the many Hua groups). As discussed earlier, Zhonghua includes all of China's minorities, including Taiwan's aborigines. Macao's census figures do not include any categories for Han; in other words, Han as an ethnic or any other type of group does not receive official recognition. The tendency to identify Chinese as Hua rather than Han may be due at least in part to the prolonged Western presence in Macao and the subsequent tendency to divide the colony's population into broad categories of Chinese and Portuguese—whereas in China proper, in the absence of Westerners, the tendency was to distinguish Han from minorities. In Hong Kong and Macao Westerners served as the Other, while in China proper the so-called minorities became the Other. The slim

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<sup>495</sup> 族裔

<sup>496</sup> *Global Results of By-census 2006* (Macao: DSEC, 2007), 203. A simple catalog of ethnic groups appears as table seven on page 29, but this list appears entirely in Chinese without English or Portuguese translations.

<sup>497</sup> 華裔

<sup>498</sup> *Global Results*, 203.



remainder of Macao's population includes various combinations of descent from Chinese (Hua), Portuguese, and miscellaneous "others."

The predilection for Hua in lieu of Han may also stem from geography—both Macao and Hong Kong are located in the southernmost region of China, far from the traditional political epicenter and therefore far removed from the Central Plains, ancestral homeland of the Han. In spite of a shared polity, distinctions between northerners and southerners have historically been quite strong. The Hakka, a distinct Han subgroup with large numbers in southern China, believe themselves to be early emigrants from the Central Plains who devoutly maintain the original culture and civilization of China.<sup>499</sup> Meanwhile Cantonese emigrants from south China made up the bulk of Huaqiao, or "overseas Chinese," literally translated as "Hua bridges." It was these immigrant Cantonese speakers who established communities in the US and elsewhere known as "Tangrenjie," or "streets of the Tang [dynasty] people"—Chinatown, though in reality it is closer to "Tangtown." It may be that Cantonese eschewed the term Han because it privileged the north over the south, and acceptance would be tantamount to uprooting their southern heritage and transplanting it in the Yellow River valley. In any case the peoples of southern China, whether Cantonese or Hakka, never did adopt the moniker Han until establishment of the PRC, and even now outside the mainland it has yet to gain acceptance.

The case of Macao's census also clearly illustrates the amorphousness of the English term "Chinese," which depending on context could be "people of Han," "people of Tang," or "people of Hua," but each of these carries its own inimitable nuances.

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<sup>499</sup> Nicole Constable, *Guest People: Hakka Identity in China and Abroad* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996). See Constable's own introductory essay for an overview of Hakka identity.

Returning to the *Global Results* of the Macanese government, both Huayi (as ethnicity) and Zhongguoji (as nationality)<sup>500</sup> are rendered into English as simply “Chinese”—the same word but with cultural meaning in one case and clear political meaning in the other: In Macao some of non-Chinese ethnicity hold a Chinese passport while some ethnic Chinese carry passports of other nations such as Portugal, Thailand, and the Philippines, another consequence of the Chinese diaspora.

## **Hong Kong**

A colonial legacy also factors into the negotiation of Chinese identities in Hong Kong, which for a century and a half served as the entrepôt for the British Empire in China. At the conclusion of the disastrous Opium War in 1842 the victorious British forced the Qing regime to accept the Treaty of Nanjing, which ceded Hong Kong Island to the crown in perpetuity. China’s second defeat in the Arrow War of 1860 saw the cession of Kowloon Peninsula to the island’s north, and in 1898 Britain succeeded in obtaining a lease on the adjacent New Territories. All this comprised the British colony of Hong Kong until the lease expired in 1997, at which time the entire territory reverted to Chinese (though in this case PRC rather than Qing) control.<sup>501</sup>

Again, while the PRC effectively institutionalized Chinese ethnic identities beginning in the 1950s, imbuing the new taxonomy into its citizenry, Hong Kong, like Macao, remained in the hands of a Western regime and out of China’s reach; therefore the fifty-six ethnic group configuration, including the concept of a Han majority, never

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<sup>500</sup> 中國籍

<sup>501</sup> Frank Welsh, *A History of Hong Kong*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Harper-Collins, 1997).

took root as it did in the mainland. Even earlier in the Nationalist period, despite close contacts between Hong Kong and southern China, there was no official and systematic propagandizing of identity as discussed in chapter two. This becomes clear when examining the most recent demographic statistics from Hong Kong. Again, like Macao and very *unlike* the PRC, Hong Kong's official census does not include a category for Han, whether defined ethnically or linguistically.

Like Macao, the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department is responsible for conducting and issuing demography reports, the most recent of which is the bilingual *2006 Population By-census*.<sup>502</sup> Table nine in this report provides an official breakdown of Hong Kong's population by "ethnicity," but again like Macao the use of certain key terms reflects the relative insularity of these communities—a detachment from the mainland that represents not only geographic but political separation. While Hong Kong, Macao, and the PRC all classify their respective populations according to "ethnicity," this is an English translation from original Chinese terms which differ in every territory: *minzu* in the PRC, *zuyi* in Macao, and *zhongzu*<sup>503</sup> in Hong Kong. Although all three phrases appear as "ethnicity," the conversion to English conceals important nuances in their approaches to identity. In Macao the term *zuyi* connotes blood lineage or what we would associate with "race" (indeed one footnote makes clear that *zuyi* is defined by *xuetong*, literally "blood ties").<sup>504</sup> The Hong Kong report stipulates that "the ethnicity of a person is determined by self-identification, normally on a social and cultural basis,"<sup>505</sup> yet the persistent use of such an antiquated term long ago abandoned in the mainland due

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<sup>502</sup> *2006 Population By-census: Summary Results* (Hong Kong: Census and Statistics Department, 2007).

<sup>503</sup> 種族. See *2006 Population By-census*, 36.

<sup>504</sup> 血統. See *Global Results*, 29 note d.

<sup>505</sup> *2006 Population By-census*, 106 n. 19.

to its historical association with ideas of physiology and genealogy suggests alternate methods of identification (as does Hong Kong's ethnic category "white," which is more a description of appearance than culture). In contrast, the PRC employs the more current phrase *minzu*, which places greater emphasis on cultural divisions. (More will be said about differences in this terminology as the chapter following examines etymology.)

More importantly, neither Hong Kong nor Macao employs the official PRC taxonomy of fifty-six ethnic groups. As mentioned earlier, Macao's population is simply Chinese (Huayi), Portuguese, some combination of the two, or "other." In stark contrast, the population of Hong Kong is broken down into such groups as "White,"<sup>506</sup> "Filipino," "Indonesian," "Indian," "Japanese," "Thai," "Other Asian," and "Other." So-called "Chinese" constitute 95% of the Hong Kong population,<sup>507</sup> but in this case Chinese are Huaren,<sup>508</sup> not Han, again a much broader conception akin to Macao's Huayi. Huaren, like the *Zhonghua minzu*, could include not only those the PRC recognizes as Han but also China's minority groups and Huaqiao—overseas Chinese. What is conspicuously missing from Hong Kong's (and Macao's) "ethnic" taxonomy, as compared with that of the PRC, are the divisions among Chinese (*Zhonghua minzu*) that have been the hallmark and *raison d'être* of ethnology in China. Instead, the finer distinctions among Chinese are eclipsed by more obvious differences between Chinese and foreigners.

Each of these territories retains its own appellation for the "Chinese" majority—Hanzu in the PRC, Huayi in Macao, and Huaren in Hong Kong. In each case the particular historical background and political milieu led to discrepancies in taxonomy and terminology, but beyond this each rubric incorporates substantively different constituents.

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<sup>506</sup> 白人

<sup>507</sup> *2006 Population By-census*, 36.

<sup>508</sup> 華人

In other words, demographic differences between territories are not merely a matter of semantics; groupings differ in both form *and* substance. Moreover, radical differences in the composition of domestic minorities—groups that ultimately define parameters of the majority—means that each territory conceives of its majority very differently. In essence, these differences underscore a lack of consensus on the meaning of Chinese.

One final point regarding languages and dialects in Hong Kong and their relationship to Chinese identity: According to the census, 90% of Hong Kong residents claim Cantonese as their “usual language,” with 4.4% reporting “other Chinese dialects” as their mother tongue while less than one percent of the population claim Mandarin as their usual language (although nearly 40% speak Mandarin as “another dialect”).<sup>509</sup> Significantly “Mandarin” in this case does not refer to Hanyu, or the Han language, the dialect spoken throughout northern China, but is rather the English equivalent of Putonghua—China’s lingua franca.<sup>510</sup> This detail remains consonant with other characteristics of Hong Kong—where there is no official recognition of either Han ethnicity or Han language.

## **Taiwan**

In both Macao and Hong Kong there exists no official recognition of Han whatsoever, a phenomenon that coincides with popular identities as discussed in the chapter following. These are both Special Administrative Regions of China, lost sheep only recently returned to the Chinese fold. Ironically the Republic of China (ROC) on

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<sup>509</sup> 2006 *Population By-census*, 52-53, tables 11-12.

<sup>510</sup> For more on the relationship between language and Chinese identity, see chapter six.

Taiwan, which still maintains *de facto* independence from the mainland PRC, *does* officially recognize a Han category. In this case it is due to a shared political history—the ROC regime in Taiwan and the PRC regime in the mainland both share roots in the Nationalist (or pre-liberation) period and both look to Sun Yat-sen as the *guofu*, or father of the Chinese nation. The reader will recall the role of Sun and the nationalists in mobilizing Han identity from the introduction of this study. While Sun had ties to both Macao and Hong Kong, it may be that because these territories were not directly under Qing governance at the time that revolutionary ideas of Hanness failed to take root as they did within the Qing empire.

Unlike Macao and Hong Kong, the ROC Ministry of Interior's Department of Statistics does not engage an analysis of the island's population by ethnicity. The Government Information Office, however, does produce a Yearbook that provides, while not statistical data, at least a narrative breakdown of Taiwan's population. Chapter two of the *Taiwan Yearbook 2006* introduces People and Language including a lengthy treatment of "Taiwan's ethnic composition," with Taiwan's ethnic groups presented in three broad categories: indigenous peoples, Han people, and new immigrants. The original nine tribes discussed in chapter three have since become twelve "aboriginal groups"<sup>511</sup> that altogether comprise less than two percent of the overall population, and yet they receive primary (and by far the most lengthy) treatment within the report, with a section devoted to each of Taiwan's twelve aboriginal groups as a distinct ethnicity.

Today the political clout of Taiwan's aborigines continues to grow even as the currency

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<sup>511</sup> 原住民, presently the accepted term in Taiwan, means "aborigines" or, more literally, "original inhabitants." The number of aboriginal groups in Taiwan remains a matter of debate and, considering this history, will likely change in the future, but for this study I follow the ROC government's published literature.

of Han wanes. For example, the 2000 census questionnaire for the ROC asks not about race or ethnicity but only about whether one has “indigenous status,” requesting a simple yes or no; an affirmative answer requires that the respondent specify to which of the nine aboriginal groups one belongs. In short, there is no consideration of any other category, let alone that of Han.<sup>512</sup>

The disproportionate prominence of Taiwan’s aborigines stems from two interrelated developments that began in the 1980s: the rise of organized political opposition after decades of authoritarian GMD rule; and the aboriginal rights movement. These together ushered in a new trend emphasizing Taiwanese identity that undermined the PRC *and* GMD, as both institutions symbolized ties to the mainland. The upsurge in Taiwanese identity gave rise to the Democratic Progressive Party (and consequently the current presidential administration) which, as part of its platform of independence from China, aggrandizes the role of aborigines in Taiwanese history and society and especially their cultural and linguistic links to Austronesia.<sup>513</sup> As discussed earlier, in the PRC, which lays claim to both the island and its inhabitants as part of China, these aborigines are known collectively as the *gaoshanzu* or “mountain people,”<sup>514</sup> one of the fifty-five minority groups that comprise the Chinese nation (*Zhonghua minzu*). In neither China nor Taiwan are aborigines considered Han; however, in China they *are* considered Chinese while in Taiwan they are *not*, a testament to the differing visions of the Chinese nation on either side of the strait.

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<sup>512</sup> From “Questionnaire of the 2000 Population and Housing Census in Taiwan.”

<sup>513</sup> Melissa J. Brown, ed., *Negotiating Ethnicities in China and Taiwan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 23-29. See also A-chin Hsiau, *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 2000).

高山族

Following a thorough treatment of each indigenous tribe, the *Yearbook* moves on to a chapter devoted to explicating Taiwan's "Han People," including sections covering the Holo, Hakka, and "mainlander" subgroups, each of which represents a particular migration wave from the mainland. According to the *Yearbook*, "the ancestors of Taiwan's Han people started to migrate from China's southeastern provinces to Taiwan in the seventeenth century. The majority of these early immigrants were composed of the Holo (also known as the southern Fujianese or the Minnanese)...and the Hakka (literally 'guest people') from eastern Guangdong province." Basically, most early migrants to the island (after the aborigines) came from the two closest provinces in southern China, Fujian and Guangdong. Elsewhere, immigrants with Fujianese heritage typically refer to themselves in their native tongue as simply Hokkien, meaning "Fujian," but *Taiwanese* who trace their ancestry to Fujian are known as Holo or Hoklo,<sup>515</sup> which means "beneath the [Yellow] river," a reference to their roots south of the Central Plains. Just as the Holo speak a regional vernacular originating from southern Fujian known as Minnan,<sup>516</sup> so Hakka also retain their own distinct language. The Hakka, historically concentrated in southern China but a significant part of the global Chinese diaspora, maintain the belief that their ancestors emigrated from the Central Plains and they therefore retain elements of China's traditional culture and civilization.<sup>517</sup> As their migrations southward encroached upon the established Punti (bendi)<sup>518</sup> peoples of the south they became known as Hakka (kejia),<sup>519</sup> "guest people" or "outsider households," new arrivals to a long

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<sup>515</sup> 河洛

<sup>516</sup> 閩南語

<sup>517</sup> Nicole Constable, ed. *Guest People: Hakka Identity in China and Abroad* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 29. See Constable's own introductory essay for an overview of Hakka identity.

<sup>518</sup> 本地

<sup>519</sup> 客家



occupied territory. These two groups—Holo and Hakka—“together now constitute about 85 percent of Taiwan's population, the former outnumbering the latter by a 4:1 ratio.”<sup>520</sup>

The third Han subdivision is mainlander, so-called *waishengren*, “people from provinces outside [Taiwan]” due to their late arrival on the island. Following the earlier migration waves, “about three hundred years passed by before Taiwan saw Han moving to the island again in large numbers. This immigration resulted from the Nationalist government's relocation to Taiwan in 1949, which brought about 1.2 million people from China, the majority of whom were in the military, the civil service, and education. Unlike earlier immigrants, these people came from every province of China. . . . These immigrants brought to Taiwan their own customs and traditions, which are as distinctive and rich as those of the Holo, Hakka, and indigenous peoples.” The plurality of Taiwanese society receives especial attention in current narratives, as it poses a challenge to the earlier GMD (and now PRC) depiction of Taiwanese as simply fellow members of the Han fraternity.

The final subgroup under the Ethnic Composition section in this chapter considers New Immigrants, an infusion that further underscores the diversity of Taiwan's population. Many immigrants come from mainland China, but a large proportion hail from nations the world over. Most of these immigrants wed Taiwanese men, and according to the Yearbook, “In 2005, these immigrants' marriages with citizens of Taiwan accounted for one in every five marriages, and children from these marriages made up 12.88 percent of all babies born.” Hence the final pronouncement that “In recent years, an increase in marriages between people of Taiwan and citizens from other nations,

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<sup>520</sup> *Taiwan Yearbook 2006* (Taipei: Government Information Office, 2007).

as well as an influx of guest workers from Southeast Asia, has made Taiwan an even more pluralistic society.”

In the past decade or so the phrase *sida zuqun*, or “the four major groups,” has gained popularity within Taiwanese society as an epithet for the island’s primary population groupings, and includes the three Han subgroups—Holo, Hakka, and mainlander—with the addition of aborigines.<sup>521</sup> Unlike the revolutionary-era nationalist schema of *wuzu gonghe* or the current fifty-six ethnic group configuration adopted by the PRC, Taiwan’s system officially divides the Han into three fully recognized and accepted ethnic groups, again an alternative to a more holistic definition of Han prevalent in the PRC. And just as the PRC uses the term *minzu* while Macao employs *zuyi* and Hong Kong uses *zhongzu*, Taiwan has adopted the term *zuqun*, yet another alternative means of organizing and classifying the population. Although all four terms share the character *zu*, which alone conveys the somewhat nebulous idea of a group united by kinship ties, still as one would expect each phrase carries its own unique historical and political implications.

## **Conclusion**

Today Han still serves a political agenda. Although the idea of Han is no longer mobilized to underscore the foreignness of a ruling elite as was the case a century ago, nor to galvanize the nation in the face of an imperialist threat, nor yet to define China’s Other; instead, at the turn of this century, it has become a means of emphasizing links to the Chinese diaspora—a tool of unity rather than division, as visualized in Fei’s rolling

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<sup>521</sup> 四大族群

snowball that lacks borders and draws all into a single Chinese body. But outside the PRC, alternative conceptions of the Chinese nation exist that challenge this view, a theme picked up in the next chapter as we explore contemporary popular conceptions of Han across political boundaries.

## FRACTURED NARRATIVE: POPULAR CONCEPTIONS OF HAN, 2004-2008

### The Republican Era

The preceding chapters traced the evolution of the Han narrative among scholars and political elites over the course of the modern period, with special focus on how the various revisions correspond with contemporary sociopolitical conditions and the perceived needs of the nation. These elites propagated their versions of the narrative through use of print media, museums, and state policy. But to what extent did their ideas reach the general populace? In other words, how do popular conceptions of Han correspond with elite definitions? Without pretending to conclusive treatment of this question, a look at some social indicators offers a preliminary answer.

Dictionaries serve as a useful index for accepted standards of language, and in this case lexicographic changes corroborate evolution of the Han narrative. Consider first the Qing dynasty *Kangxi zidian* commissioned by an emperor of the same name and completed in 1716. This celebrated tome cited passages from classical texts and provided a model for subsequent Chinese dictionaries.<sup>522</sup> While it includes an entry for the character Han, the definition lacks any reference to a people; instead, it indicates geographic place names such as a county, city, and river all sharing the name Han. While we know that the term Han served as a category for certain *peoples* before the modern era, it carried dubious meaning until becoming standardized and regularized in the twentieth

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<sup>522</sup> Teng Ssu-yü and Knight Biggerstaff, *An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Chinese Reference Works*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

century. It was not until the *Cihai* and *Ciyuan*<sup>523</sup> dictionaries of the 1930's that precise definitions of Han as an ethnic or racial group first appeared, investing an archaic word with modern meaning.

Subsequent revisions of the Han narrative necessitated revisions in its definition. A survey of forty Chinese dictionaries published over the course of the twentieth century, including those of the PRC and ROC, provides documentation of this evolution. The *Cihai* and *Ciyuan* dictionaries mentioned above reveal that Republican-era definitions of Han correspond with the racial discourse prevalent at the time, with frequent reference to Han as both descendents of the Yellow Emperor and one of the five racial groups within China's borders—Han, Man (Manchu), Meng (Mongol), Hui (Uigur Turk), and Zang (Tibetan), a comprehensive taxonomy first articulated by the Qianlong emperor in the eighteenth century.

The earliest of these dictionaries, published in 1930, defined the Han as a race (*zhongzu*) descended from the Yellow Emperor, now the largest ethnic group in China concentrated within the inner eighteen provinces. In other words, Han do not belong to the periphery of Manchuria, Mongolia, Xinjiang, or Tibet; instead, they occupy what is often called “China proper,” geographically-defined historical China centered on the ancestral homeland of Henan province.

The 1938 *Cihai* dictionary again defines Han as a *zhongzu*, one of the five peoples of greater China (*zhonghua minzu*). According to this source, the might of the Han dynasty was known among foreigners who called “our people” Hanren, and eventually the signifier became self-referential. The 1940 *Ciyuan* dictionary reiterates that Han is a *zhongzu*, the main Chinese *minzu* since the Yellow Emperor, and until after the Wei/Jin

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<sup>523</sup> 辭海, 辭源

period (circa 220-420) foreigners called Zhongguo (the Central Kingdoms) “Han.” Therefore this country’s people call themselves Han. The people of China’s “original” or “root area” are called *Hanren*, as opposed to the five other races.<sup>524</sup>

## **Han in Taiwan**

It is not surprising to find that after the ROC government’s retreat to Taiwan in 1949 dictionaries there perpetuated earlier definitions of Han, which remained a *zhongzu*, one of Sun’s five races,<sup>525</sup> descended from the Yellow Emperor and equivalent to the Chinese. The ROC maintained this definition for decades: The 1978 edition of *Ciyuan* reads exactly as the 1940 edition above, and the 1986 edition of *Cihai* includes the definition from the 1938 version. According to the 1967 *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Chinese Language*, also published in Taiwan, “Han normally refers to China’s original territory and the Chinese people.” Speaking in detail about Han as a people, *Hanzu* means the “predominant Chinese ethnic group from the Yellow Emperor, one of our country’s five big groups, mostly scattered throughout the interior/core.”<sup>526</sup> This general idea of Han persisted in Taiwan until the 1980s.

A number of significant political events with broad social repercussions occurred in the 1970s which eventually led to radical revisions of the Han narrative. Nixon’s 1972 visit to China paved the road to rapprochement between the US and PRC, culminating with the resumption of diplomatic relations in 1978. Mao’s passing in 1976 opened up the door for Deng Xiaoping’s reforms and *kaifang*, a general opening of China to the international community. Concurrently when Chiang Kai-shek died in 1975 Taiwan’s

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<sup>524</sup> 本部

<sup>525</sup> The *Ciyuan* dictionaries included the Miao among the races of China, for a total of six.

<sup>526</sup> 內地

dogged adherence to Republican-era ideologies weakened. On both sides of the Strait the decades of strictly imposed prohibitions on communication and interaction of any kind deteriorated, and gradually correspondence and information passed, albeit circuitously, between the island and the mainland. It was this watershed development that enabled a parallel revision on either side.

In 1981 Taiwan's *Guoyu cidian* still referred to Han as one of the five races, but this edition offered something new to the story of the Han. Using a tree analogy, *Hanzu* becomes "the name of the group that developed from the main trunk of Huaxia, one of the five great nationalities [of China]. During the Han dynasty it included the Huaxia family, the Eastern Yi family, the Chu Wu family, the Bai Yue family and other races; after the Han dynasty, again it referred mainly to the Han who resided in the central plains, who gradually *merged with neighboring races*. Because of the greatness of the two Han dynasties, they [these people] were called Hanzu."<sup>527</sup> In other words, during the Han dynasty "Han" as a people referred to anyone under the political rule of the Han regime, a disparate group that included Huaxia as well as peripheral barbarians. But barbarians were only Han in a political sense. With the demise of the Han dynasty the meaning of Han as a people narrowed to those of *Huaxia* heritage living in the central plains area.

More importantly, this passage suggests that Han of the present day are not simply the direct lineal descendents of *Huaxia* or the Han dynasty, but a more heterogeneous mixture that includes "races" from outside the central plains—the barbarians of the classical histories. Now Han heritage extends to peripheral peoples and regions. Significantly this definition corresponds very closely with simultaneous

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<sup>527</sup> Italics added.

revisions in the PRC, a phenomenon easily explained by the dramatic shift in international politics.

### **Han in Mao's China**

Returning to revisions under the PRC, regime change in the mainland in 1949 meant re-envisioning the Chinese nation and the role of the Han to accord with the Communist Party line. As discussed in chapter four, in the immediate post-liberation period the PRC government sponsored and directed the *minzu shibie* (ethnic identification) project, eventually recognizing a total of fifty-six ethnic groups—the Han and fifty-five minorities. This development necessitated a major revision of the national narrative. While PRC dictionaries came to reflect the new official taxonomy, outside of the PRC the five races idea persisted, as reflected in the passage from Taiwan's *Guoyu cidian* of 1981 cited above.

### **Han after Mao**

Minor amendments aside, during the Mao era academic and official definitions of the Han remained relatively uniform. It was only in the 1980s, after Mao's passing and in the heyday of Deng Xiaoping's reforms, that the narrative of the Han underwent drastic revision.

As covered in chapter three, the work of Li Chi and others at Anyang had already projected Han origins back to the Shang dynasty. Chapter five discussed the 1959 discovery of Erlitou, another Henan culture preceding the Shang. Chinese archaeologists identified Erlitou as the site of the Xia, China's earliest dynasty according to classical



sources. The assumed but as yet unproven connection between Erlitou and the Xia prompted an interesting revision in the story of the Han. Whereas in the past the Han narrative typically began with the Yellow Emperor in spite of his dubious authenticity, in the 1980s this exalted progenitor of the Han race disappeared entirely from academic and official accounts. Updated versions of the story claim that the Han originated from *Huaxia*, an ancient ethnonym for the people of the central plains. Although the term *Huaxia* existed before Erlitou, it was only written into the standard narrative when it became more credible than the idea of a Yellow Emperor.

Around this same time mainland dictionaries also dropped references to the central plains as the Han homeland. The 1986 *Modern Chinese Dictionary* defines the Han as “our country’s most populous ethnic group, scattered throughout every region of the entire country.” Earlier editions restricted the Han preserve to the central plains or even the eighteen provinces of China proper, yet now the Han dominate all of China.<sup>528</sup> The PRC government did in fact engage in a colonization project which populated the fringe areas with Han migrants, so that today Han outnumber Tibetans in Tibet. It could be that this revision actually represents a related attempt by the center to claim the periphery—after all, if Han belong to the center, what claim would China have to the outskirts peopled by foreigners? But with “Chinese” in Tibet, Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Taiwan, the Chinese government could legitimize its claims to those areas.

The preceding passage illustrates another revision—the Han are now China’s most populous *ethnic* group. Chinese dictionaries gradually phased out the term *zhongzu* or “race” in favor of *minzu*, which in the early twentieth century often meant race also but is now formally translated as “ethnic group” or “nationality.” As in the West, WWII

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<sup>528</sup> *Xiandai Hanyu cidian*

ensured that the idea of race was no longer associated with objective science but with *racism*. Use of the word in both languages declined in the postwar period, but in China today the word *zhongzu* has become archaic and obsolete—everyone knows their ethnicity but no one is sure of their race or even exactly what *zhongzu* means.<sup>529</sup> By the 1990s dictionaries always define Han as a *minzu*, never the politically incorrect *zhongzu*.

Perhaps the most drastic transformation of the Han narrative occurred in the 1990s. According to earlier accounts China had five “races,” discrete groups of distinct lineage genealogies, each with its own culture, language, and geographic region, but also bearing unique physiological traits. The gradual acceptance of “ethnicity” and the primacy of culture moved definitions away from racial ideas of lineal descent and biology. This trend dovetailed with a growing tendency to incorporate the periphery into the national narrative while decentering both the central plains and the Han, a phenomenon covered in chapter five. In line with this fad PRC dictionaries no longer perpetuated a belief in discrete, homogenous groups (whether racial or ethnic) but instead began defining the Han as *mixed blood* descendents of Huaxia *and other* Chinese groups. This latest revision promotes the idea of a Chinese national melting pot wherein all citizens, minority and Han alike, share blood lineage and cultural heritage. Just as geographically the central plains and the periphery now belong to *all* Chinese, so too does Chinese history, which is no longer exclusively Han history but redefined to include the history of traditional subalterns. As suggested in the previous chapter, recasting the nation as a familial unit with ties spanning millennia encourages national unity while circumventing internecine conflict.

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<sup>529</sup> See the following section on popular conceptions of Han.

The 1990 *Hanyu dacidian* offers a fairly lengthy and detailed definition of Han that exhibits all of the major changes outlined above. This edition alleges that the word Han “anciently referred to *Huaxia zu*” but now refers to the *Hanzu*, “the most populous ethnic group of the *Zhonghua minzu*.” The passage offers a very politically correct declaration from Chairman Mao, who supposedly said that “the *Hanzu* population is numerous, and formed from many ethnic groups mixing blood over a long period of time.” The dictionary then elaborates on the Chairman’s quote, stating that the *Hanzu* are “our country’s principal ethnic group. From antiquity *Huaxiazu* and other *zu* gradually developed. They are spread throughout the entire country, mainly concentrated along the Yellow, Yangzi, and Pearl rivers as well as the plains.” Again in 1998 the *Hanzu* are defined as “China’s main ethnic group, they developed gradually from *Huaxiazu* and other ethnic groups mixing blood over a protracted period of time.” They are scattered throughout the country, mainly concentrated in the three river valleys and plains regions.<sup>530</sup>

## **Han Language**

Another development was a change in the popular term for the Mandarin language. China has always exhibited rich linguistic diversity rivaling that of Europe or Africa, but use of an official language and script helped the various dynasties maintain some semblance of unity. In imperial China the literati, the scholar gentry of the bureaucracy, used a lingua franca called *guanhua* which became key to effective governance across a vast and diverse realm. In the Nationalist period this language became known as *guoyu*, the “national language.” Even today Mandarin is called *guoyu*

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<sup>530</sup> 1998 古汉语大词典

in Taiwan, another vestige of the Republican era. But under the PRC Mandarin became *Hanyu*, literally the “Han language,” and this is precisely what it means: Hanyu is “the language of the Hanzu, the main language of our country. Standard modern Hanyu is *putonghua*,”<sup>531</sup> or the official language of the PRC derived from the dialect of northern China. In essence, the spoken language that prevails in the central plains is the language of ethnic Han. But China’s linguistic diversity defies this claim. Ironically, for many of those categorized as ethnic Han, Hanyu is not their mother tongue and some do not speak Mandarin at all. This is especially true among Cantonese speakers in the south and Taiwanese (or Minnanyu) speakers in Taiwan, where proficiency in the “Han language” varies widely.<sup>532</sup>

By 1990, however, dictionary entries circumvent this problem. According to one selection, *Hanyu* means both the language and script of the Han dynasty, but also the language of the *Hanzu*. It is “the main language of China, one of the world’s most developed, most rich languages. With an ancient history, it has the greatest number of speakers.” The main dialects of Hanyu include the northern dialect, Hakka, Minnan, and Cantonese among others, although the Beijing dialect serves as a standard for the common language of modern Han. Unlike the earlier excerpt, which simply defines *Hanyu* as the language of ethnic Han, this shrewd choice of vocabulary manipulates rules of inclusion and exclusion. Significantly this source glosses over the fact that Hakka, Minnan, Cantonese, and Mandarin are mutually unintelligible languages, opting instead to call them “dialects” or regional variants of a single language—Hanyu. This would be akin to dubbing German, French, Spanish, and English all “dialects” of “European,” a

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<sup>531</sup> 1986 *Xiandai Hanyu cidian*

<sup>532</sup> See the section following.

suggestion which might offend national identities. Likewise emphasizing differences among the various “Han” languages may foster the development of splinter identities and potentially lead to political independence, something already underway in Taiwan where there is growing emphasis on Taiwanese language over *guoyu*. The segment goes on to explain that Hanyu belongs to the Han/Cang (Sino-Tibetan) language family, a broader rubric that includes many minority languages under the umbrella of “Chinese.” Again, such linguistic taxonomy plays into the political aims of a government bent on promoting unity among its citizens.

Finally, this entry marks another conspicuous difference with past definitions. Consider that the entry on Han in the *Kangxi zidian* of 1716 did not include any references to a people at all. Nearly a century ago Sun Yat-sen had estimated that: “For the most part the four hundred million people of China can be spoken of as completely Han Chinese.” As of 1990, Han “population exceeds 930 million (from 1982 census), standing at 93.3% of the entire national population.”<sup>533</sup> A conspicuous absence on the one hand and then Sun’s vague assessment on the other both contrast markedly with the updated figure given by this dictionary after the benefit of a series of national censuses. Clearly over the course of the twentieth century Chinese dictionaries offered definitions and figures with increasing detail and precision, a testament to the growing importance of understanding the Han people.

**Conclusion:** The concept of Han as an ethnic or racial group became standardized only in the twentieth century. This survey of forty Chinese dictionaries published over the course of the twentieth century, including those of the PRC and ROC, shows that in the Republican period Han was one of China’s five racial (or sometimes ethnic) groups

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<sup>533</sup> 1990 汉语大词典

descended from the Yellow Emperor. This definition persisted for decades under the ROC regime in Taiwan, with the same scheme of five groups, greater emphasis on race, and descent from *Huangdi*. Meanwhile, shortly after its establishment, the PRC replaced the term *zhongzu* and its accompanying racial overtones with the more culturally oriented *minzu*, meaning nationality or ethnic group. Authorities also gradually phased the Yellow Emperor out of the story while the more acceptable *Huaxia* appeared in his stead. By the 1990s dictionaries in both the ROC and PRC referred to Han as mixed blood descendents of *Huaxia* and other groups, a development that emerged from post Cold War politics and the opening of informal channels between the two countries.

### **Epilogue/Postscript: Popular Conceptions of Han**

The survey of dictionaries clearly demonstrates that definitions of Han changed over time, but by including dictionaries published in Taiwan and Hong Kong one can also see that at any one time the meaning of Han differed regionally depending on political context. Thus it seems appropriate to cap a study on the changing meaning of Han over the twentieth century with an examination of contemporary popular conceptions of Han as we enter the twenty-first century. Crossing both heuristic and geographic boundaries in our pursuit of Han identity provides a holistic picture of Chinese identities and nationalism, not as a fictionalized monolithic whole, but on a regional and individual level. Such an approach recognizes the concept of one China but the reality of diverse perspectives on China.

Between January 2005 and March 2006, I spoke with a total of forty individuals in the PRC, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao about what it means to be Han. I initiated

discussion using a simple interview questionnaire asking first about personal background including race, ethnicity, language, and nation. The document, provided below, then poses two open questions: Who are the Han, and what are the special characteristics of Han people?<sup>534</sup>

调查表 Questionnaire  
博思源 Clayton D. Brown  
美国匹兹堡大学 University of Pittsburgh

### 您背景 Your Background

年龄 Age:

国家 Country:

民族 Ethnicity:

母语 Mother Tongue:

种族 Race:

### 问题 Questions

“汉族”是指谁? **Who** are the Han?

汉人有什么特征? **What** are the special characteristics of Han people?

### **Personal Background**

I designed the first section, that on personal background, partly for basic demographic information but more importantly to better understand certain aspects of

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<sup>534</sup> For the survey I used two versions of the same questionnaire. The one provided here is the PRC version with simplified characters, while the version distributed in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan used traditional characters. Beyond this the two documents were identical.

Chinese identity that, unlike gender, age, and occupation, are often ambiguous and open to interpretation. As we shall see, many Han lack consensus on a shared nation, language, culture, race, or even ethnicity.

For instance, when asking about *guojia* (country/state), those in the mainland responded that they belong to either “Zhongguo” (China) or the full political title “Peoples’ Republic of China.” In Taiwan, the same query elicited a response of either “Taiwan” or “Republic of China,” *never* Zhongguo and *certainly* never the PRC. Those in Hong Kong and Macao answered that their country/state is either “Hong Kong,” “Macao,” or “China” (Zhongguo), but again *never* did these respondents answer with PRC. Because *guojia* connotes a political entity it comes as no surprise that these Han in Taiwan do not identify with the PRC—the communist government never did control the island, and identification with *Zhongguo* would also infer political ties to mainland China. As for Hong Kong and Macao, one could speculate that since 1997 and 1999 respectively, the two Special Administrative Regions see themselves as reunited with China but not with the PRC government. After all, the two entities were under the control of foreign colonial powers when Mao established the People’s Republic. Perhaps in the future, when a generation has grown up under the PRC, the people of Hong Kong and Macao will identify with that state, but at present this does not seem to be the case.

When asked about ethnicity, those in the PRC answered both readily and unequivocally that they are Han, sometimes with a degree of incredulity (“what else would I be?”). For those in Taiwan ethnicity was either “Han” or “Zhonghua,” but generally they were not as certain as those in the PRC and a few individuals, after hesitating, explained that they have some “aboriginal blood” (*yuanzhumin*) in their



ancestry which called into question their status as Han. Clearly in this case ethnicity is more closely related to lineage than culture, a salient characteristic of responses in Taiwan. In Hong Kong and Macao only two individuals claimed to be ethnically Han. Instead most reported their ethnicity as *zhongguo* (curiously not *zhonghua*), which is interesting because elsewhere *Zhongguo* is considered a polity or geographic territory rather than an ethnic group. It could be that in this case *zhongguo* was short for *zhongguoren*, which would simply mean “Chinese.” In any case, even among those who consider themselves Han, little agreement exists about whether this represents ethnicity or some other classification.

Whereas discussions in the PRC reveal that one’s ethnicity is always assuredly clear, asking about race proved far more problematic—after much head scratching and requests for me to clarify the difference with ethnicity (which I declined to do), most respondents guessed their race was Han or, in a few cases, the antiquated *Huangzhong* (Yellow race) mentioned in chapter one. For those in Taiwan, fully half believed that race was the “same as ethnicity” and therefore they are ethnically *and* racially Han, but three individuals thought of themselves as racially *Quanzhouren* (a region of Fujian province in mainland China), one considers himself of the Taiwanese race, and another is racially “Chinese.” Among those in Hong Kong and Macao, three abstained from answering the question of race because they thought it inapplicable, three answered *Zhongguo* (including one claiming “Han” ethnicity), one considered himself racially “Asian,” and one person is racially *zhonghua*. If dissention exists with reference to ethnicity, the question of race is nothing short of bewildering.

Though in northern China everyone consistently claimed Hanyu (Han language) as a mother tongue, in southern China this was not the case. For instance, in Guangzhou most answered with Cantonese (*Guangdonghua* or *Yueyu*) or Cantonese *and* Hanyu. In Xiamen many responded with Fujianese alone (language of Fujian province) or in combination with Mandarin. Never did anyone in these southern areas claim Hanyu as their sole or primary language. For those in Taiwan, mother tongue was nearly always Taiwanese/Minnanyu (a Fujian derivative), sometimes in combination with Guoyu, with only one respondent in Taiwan claiming *guoyu* alone as their mother tongue.<sup>535</sup> Among those in Hong Kong, mother tongue is *solely* Cantonese (*Guangdonghua* or *Yueyu*), *never* Hanyu nor even Chinese (*zhongguohua*). Those in Macao also claimed Cantonese as a mother tongue, though many also speak Portuguese and English with varying proficiency. Clearly few people would agree with the dictionary definition of the “Han language” discussed earlier, which suggested Hanyu is a broad category inclusive of Cantonese, Fujianese, Minnanyu, and other regional “dialects.” Instead, according to this sample, Chinese people tend to see Hanyu more narrowly as an equivalent to *Putonghua*, the official national language used across China but native to the central plains region of the north.

All these background questions really serve as an exercise in self categorization. The opacity of the categories, though somewhat confusing, also demands individual interpretation, and the areas of disagreement and difference become just as meaningful as any areas of consonance. Overall it suggests that even the Han cannot agree on a single trait that unites them—whether ethnicity, race, language, territory, or other identifiers.

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<sup>535</sup> This was in Taipei and environs. In southern Taiwan it is likely that the number of those speaking only Taiwanese would have been far greater.

## Survey in the PRC

As already suggested by answers to the background questions, in the PRC, where the government codified a system of ethnic groups into law and stamps ethnicity in IDs and passports, everyone confidently informed me of their ethnicity without the slightest reservation. Nearly half of respondents during the course of our discussion also brought up the fifty-six ethnic group configuration unprompted, showing not only an awareness and acceptance of the official taxonomy but a real identification with the label and category. Beyond that certainty, however, their understanding of Han in general reveals a great degree of ambiguity and discord. While minorities exhibit special characteristics, the Han are unique in that they *lack* special characteristics. Most people defined Han by population or simply as the majority. They also tended to refer to Han as “normal Chinese” who (unlike minorities) lack shared beliefs, foods, customs, language, or territory. In fact, rather than listing any defining characteristics of the Han, people were more apt to describe minority uniqueness.

For instance, one Beijing taxi driver, when asked who the Han are, gestured outside the window and said: “Just regular people, like in Beijing.” When asked about the people in the countryside versus urban Beijing, whether they too constitute “regular people,” he said “all Han are basically the same.” When I persisted by contrasting their disparate lifestyles, he explained that they all used to be the same, they all came from the same place (*zhongyuan*), but now differences exist. Nowadays the Chinese people are “all mixed together.” This abbreviated account of the Han narrative certainly jibes with the current official version discussed in the chapter previous. When I went on to ask this

same man about the unique characteristics of the Han, he said they have none.

“Minorities each have their own beliefs, customs, language, foods, etc. Like the Hui don’t eat pork; but the Han have no special beliefs or dietary restrictions.”

This tendency to define the Han negatively against minorities pervaded my discussions with PRC citizens. Many echoed the prototypical response of another Beijing resident, who reported that the Han are the most populous of the ethnic groups. When asked what, beyond high population, characterizes the Han, he merely replied that they are *not* Dai or Zhuang or Hui. Another taxi driver, this one in the historic city of Xi’an southwest of Beijing, also characterized the Han as “normal Chinese.”<sup>536</sup> For him the defining characteristic of the Han is that “there are many of them. You get ten Chinese people together, nine are Han. The rest are the minority ’cause there are fewer of them.” He also defined the Han against the Hui, saying the Hui believe in Islam. When asked what the Han believe in, he simply replied: “Whatever they want.”

As argued in earlier chapters, the Han/other dichotomy remains a key component of Chinese cosmology. According to convention, the civilized (Han) always occupy the geographic center, are sedentary, literate, and eat cooked food, whereas the feral barbarians reside in the periphery as ignorant nomads who roam the grasslands of the steppe and eat their food raw.<sup>537</sup> These same familiar motifs appear in many popular descriptions of Han (and minority) characteristics. For example, a young female hotel clerk in Xi’an defined the Han as one of China’s fifty-six ethnic groups, of which they comprise the greater part. When asked about unique characteristics, she replied that “they have yellow skin. Most are sedentary, not that nomadic kind of the steppe grasslands. The

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<sup>536</sup> 一般的中国人

<sup>537</sup> See Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

character of most is outspoken and straightforward, honest and kindhearted, and happy to help people.” Her coworker reiterated that the Han are indeed one of the fifty-six Chinese ethnic groups, with the Han comprising two-thirds of the population. “Their lifestyle is pretty much relatively centralized and concentrated [in densely populated areas]. Also they are sedentary. They eat cooked food mostly, Han don’t like to eat raw food. Han clothing gives one a feeling of simplicity, taste, naturalness, and neatness. Clothing of other minorities each has its own unique taste and style.”

When questioning a woman in Beijing, I once again received the predictable reply that Han are the most populous of the fifty-six ethnic groups, with 96% of the entire country’s population. Like the Xi’an hotel clerk, she believed that cuisine plays a part in identity, though she was much more explicit about their diet, explaining: “Han like to eat pork, mutton, dog, and chicken, but Hui people don’t eat pork.” Also like the Xi’an hotel clerk, she believed that fashion plays a part in Han identity, but she specified that “Han clothing is primarily the *qipao*, which was vogue in Tang dynasty times.”<sup>538</sup>

Although discussions on the topic of Han identity in the PRC exhibited a great deal of uniformity, I of course also confronted a few deviations. One of the more unique responses came from a man in Beijing who, when asked to explain for me who the Han are, thought for a moment and suggested it may be best to ask a historian. He was completely unaware of the irony that I am a historian who assumed it would be best to ask a Han. But his desire to consult a historian again underscores the prominent role that academics play in identity formation, both as experts and the source of “truth.” As the specialists change their story, the official line and eventually public opinion follow suit.

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<sup>538</sup> The *qipao*, aside from being a twentieth century creation, is a woman’s dress designed from the hybridization of traditional Chinese and modern Western clothing styles. See Patricia Ebrey, *China: A Cultural, Social, and Political History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 261.

Generally speaking, popular definitions of Han identity in the PRC seldom touched on issues of race, whether descent or biology. One exception was the aforementioned female hotel clerk in Xi'an, who just said that Han have yellow skin. In the only other instance someone brought up Han physiology, our discussion did not progress beyond one sentence. When asked about the Han, this Beijing resident gave the familiar reply: "Han are one of the fifty-six ethnic groups of the People's Republic of China." When asked about special characteristics, she replied that they have yellow skin and black hair. When I mentioned that Japanese and Koreans also have these traits, she had no ready reply.

To get at a more academic answer I posed the same set of questions to two specialists at the Central University for Nationalities. As both experts in the relevant field of anthropology *and* professors at a university for minorities, I had high hopes for a cogent response. After considering my question for several moments they told me with some confidence that all Han use Chinese characters. I felt obliged to point out that many minorities, including those at their school (where minorities are the majority), also use characters and that I too as a foreigner use characters. I also suggested that some Han may be illiterate, and wondered if this disqualified them from Han status. They seemed aware of this quandary, and agreed that the criteria for being Han poses a complex problem with no easy solution, but that the Han Research Society is now in the process of exploring this question.

Considering all these responses as a whole, it seems that the PRC created a specific category with a quantifiable number of Han, and this official taxonomy has indeed permeated popular views. But like an empty box, the PRC failed to define Han as

a people—a phenomenon Dru Gladney referred to as the “undefined majority” with parallels in the official US category “white” or Caucasian.<sup>539</sup>

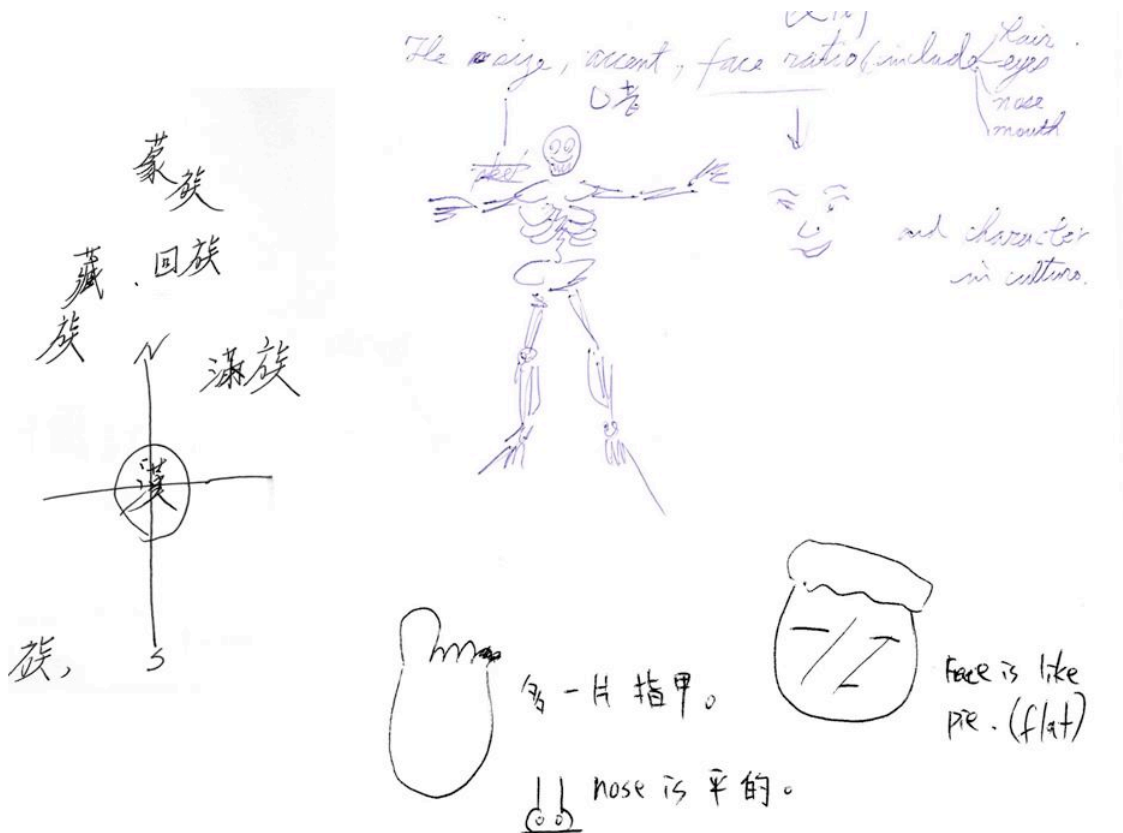
### **Survey in Taiwan**

But if responses in China seem relatively uniform or even predictable, those encountered in Taiwan tended to greater variation. And whereas those in the PRC avoided discussion along racial lines, in Taiwan my questionnaire often elicited inventories of Han phenotypes. These definitions seem to reflected vestigial ideas of Han as race, defined primarily by physical characteristics and lineage stretching back to the central plains or the Yellow Emperor, though in Taiwan the Han are also occasionally associated with Confucian culture.

For instance, in his response to my questions a professional musician suggested that “the main race in China we call Han” may be recognized by “[body] size, accented features, and face ratio [measurements] including hair, eyes, nose, and mouth” and by “character in culture.” The detailed diagram of Han face and skeletal structure accompanying these remarks appears below. Likewise a biology lab worker indicated that the Han are those whose ancestors lived in the Yellow and Yangzi River valleys. They are recognizable by certain physical anomalies including the nail of the smallest toe, and by a flat nose. Her twelve year old daughter explained that the Han are a type of race, and elaborated on their physical characteristics such as an extra toenail, a flat nose, and a face “flat like a pie.” Their artwork appears below as well.

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<sup>539</sup> Dru Gladney, “Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 53, no. 1 (1994): 92-123. On the fiction of whiteness in America see Ruth Frankenberg, *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).



The third illustration resembling a compass came from someone who defined the Han geographically. This person employed Sun’s familiar five races configuration, explaining that “among the five big races, the Han are principally of the Yellow River valley, different from the Manchu, Mongol, Hui and Tibetan peoples outside the river valleys.” But the Han also exhibit observable physical traits, namely a physique smaller than Westerners, a relatively flat facial form, black hair, and black eyes. Culture also apparently plays a role, as the Han subscribe to “all sorts of marriage customs.”

Several others offered graphic depictions of the Han homeland, but significantly it had migrated south of the central plains. One of these individuals, who considers their country/state Taiwan, and ethnicity, mother tongue and race all “Taiwanese,” believes that the Han lived in “southern China...between the Yellow and Yangzi Rivers,” and offered a crude drawing of a region directly across the straits from Taiwan, an area that



would be Fujian and Guangdong, surrounded by minority regions of Tibet, Xinjiang, and northern China (perhaps Manchuria). Another person, claiming Han ethnicity, assumed that race was the same as ethnicity, confessing “I really don’t know the difference.” Han characteristics today include a short and small physique, and black eyes. For this young woman Han “originally indicated the people who resided in the region of the central plains, living south of the Yellow River.”

In the past, particularly under the regime of Chiang Kai-shek, the ROC government emphasized the Chineseness of Taiwan’s citizens. The Ministry of Education imposed a strict regimen of Chinese history, language, and geography in Taiwan’s classrooms. Today, however, the ROC Ministry of Education is placing increasingly greater emphasis on Taiwanese history, Taiwanese language, and Taiwanese geography, the latter oriented toward the Pacific rather than the mainland. This shift may to some extent account for erroneously situating the central plains south of the Yellow River or even squarely in southern China. But the fact that most Taiwanese share ancestral origins in southern China may also influence this misconception—perhaps they equate Taiwanese origins with Han origins.

For a high school literature teacher, the Han are again those “whose ancestors originate from the central plains with genealogy traceable to origins with the Yellow Emperor.” Considering her vocation, however, it comes as no surprise that she also associates the Han with literacy and Confucianism, explaining that “because of the influence of Confucian thought and the lengthy history of cultural traditions, in sum the Han are relatively urbane, genteel and cultivated.” Here again, like the professors in the PRC, the educated seem inclined to ascribe proficiency in characters exclusively to the

Han, and because literacy is the hallmark of civilization, by extension the Han enjoy a monopoly on that as well.

A businessman with a graduate degree from the prestigious National Taiwan University said the narrow definition of Han is simply “Chinese people with Han blood lineage, but actually it’s very difficult to discern who has pure Han blood.” A more general definition is “Chinese who grow up under Han culture... peripheral ethnic groups, we don’t consider them Han, especially because their ancestors are different.” He divided the special characteristics of the Han into two types: biophysical and cultural traits. For the first, he says only that there are many sayings, such as that the Han have an extra crease at the elbow joint, “but I myself am not completely sure whether these sayings are correct.” As for the cultural component, it includes “Confucian influence, emphasis on the five relationships, language and script, primacy of exams, and [the Confucian values of] ritual and propriety.”

The tendency of respondents in Taiwan to resort to sketches in order to clearly convey their ideas indicates, I believe, a more concrete set of criteria than in the PRC, where the Han are instead some nondescript, vacuous entity defined only by what they are *not*. Another salient difference in ROC conceptions of the Han lies with Confucianism, and while only about one third of respondents in Taiwan mentioned a relationship between Confucianism and the Han, outside of Taiwan it never came up. This hardly comes as a surprise, however, since Maoist iconoclasm had roundly denounced Confucius and his tradition, thus precluding a return to Confucianism as heritage of the Han. In contrast, Chiang Kai-shek had countered the appeal of communism with his New Life Movement, which made Confucianism a state religion

and Confucius' birthday a national holiday. Since the 1980s, however, the mainland has seen a resurgence of interest in Confucian philosophy, a trend which in the future may mean the reintegration of Confucianism into Han identity.<sup>540</sup>

Finally, a Taiwanese doctoral student of anthropology said that the Han are “ethnically derived from people who originally lived in the yellow earth plains who since migrated to many places in geographic China. They bore the cultural identity which is claimed to have a continuous heritage from Xia, Shang, and Zhou.” The special characteristics of the Han include: 1) General physical appearances which differ from other minorities. 2) The mother tongues of the Han share similar background, traceable to a single region. 3) Culturally they are taught to be the Han, bearing the teaching of Confucius or other doctrines such as shared historical background and ancestral origins in ‘*zhongyuan*.’”

Surprisingly, in Taiwan Han identity is not defined against the island's aboriginal population but against the big four minorities in the mainland. Because these definitions, whether based on biology, lineage, culture, or territory, all link Han to the mainland, it would seem that the persistence of Han identity in Taiwan would serve Beijing's claim on Taiwan and its people. Conversely, it could be that in Taiwan the increasing identification with parochial Taiwanese identity is steadily displacing identification with the Han and therefore gradually severing ties with China. In any case, Han identity in Taiwan carries clear political implications.<sup>541</sup>

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<sup>540</sup> For evidence of the resurgence of Confucianism in the PRC see Guo Yingjie and Baogang He, “Reimagining the Chinese Nation: The ‘Zeng Guofan Phenomenon,’” *Modern China* 25.2 (1999): 142-170.

<sup>541</sup> For further discussion of Taiwan's Chineseness see Melissa Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

## Survey in Hong Kong and Macao

In contrast to the PRC and Taiwan, in Hong Kong and Macao the term “Han” seldom appears in common discourse, and my questions about the Han elicited quizzical looks more often than coherent answers. Individuals consistently identified themselves, both racially and ethnically, as Chinese, Hong Konger, or Macanese rather than Han. When asked to define the term, most people simply equated Han with the Chinese. The only specific traits consistently associated with the Han were decidedly physical—yellow skin, black hair, black eyes, etc., and often these were brought up only after some cajoling.

For instance, when asked who the Han are, one woman in Hong Kong said simply “Han are Chinese.” When asked about their unique characteristics, she replied with a terse “they have none.” A short while later I posed the same questions to a Hong Kong teen, who told me “the Han are Chinese people,” with no distinguishing characteristics. When pressed for elaboration, he explained to me: “I am Chinese in Hong Kong.”

When respondents in Hong Kong and Macao *did* describe Han characteristics, these usually fell under the rubric of phenotypes but still offered little in the way of variation or originality. A twenty year old female in Macao equated the Han with *zhonghua minzu*, a broad category of Chinese encompassing minorities and overseas Chinese. She maintained that the Han are primarily defined by physical features, including yellow skin, black eyes, black hair, and short frame. But linguistically the Han also speak fluent Cantonese *and* Mandarin (*guoyu*), which would actually exclude most Han by PRC standards. When I pointed out that some people in Taiwan speak *only*

Taiwanese, she added regional “dialects” to her criteria, such as those of Chaozhou and Fujian.

A Hong Kong resident in his forties also said the Han are simply Chinese, with yellow skin and short stature. When I pointed out that this could describe the Japanese, I was told that the Japanese came from China. When asked about differences between the two, he said “the Japanese have smaller eyes.” A Malaysian man in Hong Kong, also in his forties, who considers himself both ethnically and racially Chinese (*zhonghua minzu*), also equated the Chinese with the Han but unlike others, he referred to Sun’s five racial groups. He explained that the Han share black hair, brown eyes, and yellow skin. When asked how this differs from the Japanese, he insisted that the Japanese are Han who moved to the islands during the Tang dynasty.

Despite the general confusion surrounding the question of race, some people seemed to believe that ethnicity is a racial subgroup. Just as one person in the PRC considered herself ethnically Han but racially *Huangzhong* (Yellow Race), so a college student at the University of Macao considered himself ethnically Han but racially Chinese (*zhongguoren*). For him the Han “are one of China’s five great ethnic groups, China’s biggest race.” Once again they are characterized by small stature, yellow skin, black eyes, but also their industriousness. Another young man in Macao initially responded that his country is China, then thought better of it and replaced it with Macao. He considers himself ethnically Chinese (*zhongguoren*), and racially Asian. Perhaps due to his position in the periphery he defined Han in the broadest possible terms, calling them *dazhonghuaminzu*, which again would include minorities and overseas Chinese. In

his estimation the Han all share yellow skin, black eyes, and speak *Huayu*, which encompasses every Chinese dialect.

A college student in Macao also seemed to equate the Han with the Chinese, but defined them politically as: “All races living under the rule of the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of China.” Whereas cultural definitions were few and far between in Hong Kong and Macao, for her the Han share an “emphasis on the family and blood lineage.” In contrast, her classmate said that the Han are not simply the same as Chinese people but the *greater part* of the Chinese people. Their uniqueness lies strictly in material culture, as “Han clothing is different, and food is different” from minorities, but their physical appearance is otherwise the same.

In short, it would seem that in Hong Kong and Macao the term Han lacks currency—instead residents use the word Chinese, presumably because as a former Western colony the most important identity was as Chinese or foreigner. The foreign presence, it seems, may have encouraged solidarity within the Chinese community by eclipsing any Chinese subdivisions. Although Hong Kong and Macao now officially belong to the PRC, this happened very recently and their Special Administrative Region status keeps Beijing administratively at arm’s length. These factors may explain why perceptions of the Han in Hong Kong and Macao significantly differ from those in the PRC, where no one mentioned race or biology but everyone is familiar with the system of fifty-six ethnic groups and clearly affiliates with one of those groups.

In each case, recent political history can explain the divergence of Han identities. In Taiwan, the meaning of Han seems to be a remnant of the ROC emphasis on Confucianism, race (biology and lineage), and the logic of five races. Meanwhile citizens

of the PRC tend to view the Han as simply ordinary people, the banal majority among fifty-five exotic minorities. Though the term Han is seldom used in Hong Kong and Macao, a vague understanding generally exists that Han means Chinese, a much broader meaning than found elsewhere.

## CONCLUSION: DISAPPEARANCE OF THE HAN

Just as Critical White Studies proved that the meaning of White has changed over time and space, so an examination of Han in the historiography shows that its meaning is dependent on heuristic and political context. While millennia ago Hanren may have simply meant “subjects of the Han dynasty,” during the Yuan it meant people of northern China; in the early Qing, Hanjun referred to the Chinese-martial unit of Nurhaci’s Eight Banners, an eclectic mix of frontier peoples who simply shared a settled lifestyle, yet over the course of the dynasty some Hanjun became Manchu while others were assimilated into the population at large, thus becoming Hanzu; Qing court policies along with later revolutionary rhetoric emphasized genealogies, which when combined with Western-derived scientific taxonomies helped to racialize China’s population. Han thereafter claimed lineal descent from the Yellow Emperor, the very founder of Chinese civilization, making Han heirs to the great civilization that had for eons dominated northern China. Thus the ideology of perpetually separate and distinct races helped to alienate the Manchus and end their dynasty.

But the equation of Han with the Chinese nation, while an easy means of advancing national unity, excluded groups that occupied the same political sphere. This quandary necessitated a more inclusive paradigm found in the phrase *wuzu gonghe*, or five races united, espoused by Sun Yat-sen and promulgated by the early Republic. The advent of anthropology in China then became the key to formulating a cogent narrative of the nation that would both substantiate Sun’s vision while maintaining scientific



plausibility. Building on revolutionary ideology, China's first anthropology dissertation, submitted by Harvard doctoral student Li Chi in 1923, reified belief in the Han as civilizers who kept histories, wall builders with sedentary culture, and as descendents of the Yellow Emperor. But it was his training in physical anthropology that enabled Li to revise, or rather enhance, earlier narratives by defining the Han in expressly biological terms.

In the 1920s archaeologists, led by Li Chi, began searching for Chinese racial and cultural origins in the Yellow River valley of the Central Plain, fabled homeland of the Yellow Emperor and cradle of Chinese civilization. Li's excavation at Anyang became the key to linking prehistoric and historic China into a linear sequence stretching from the Bronze Age through millennia of empire to the present nation. Soon he had worked other discoveries into the sequence, pushing Chinese origins back to Longshan and Yangshao Neolithic cultures and even into the Paleolithic with Peking Man. This descent group, which Li termed the "Chinese race," began with native hominids that evolved in the Central Plains to become today's Han.

Meanwhile China's ethnologists studied non-Han minorities in the rugged and remote frontiers, grappling with the question of their relationship to the Han and their role in the national narrative. The Japanese seizure of Manchuria in 1931 sparked a movement to rhetorically integrate the periphery into the Chinese nation, and in the years that followed, unity through integration and assimilation became a pervasive theme in wartime ethnographies. By the end of the war, even Chiang Kai-shek had generated an official narrative that drew on these studies, recounting the growth of China's five clans from a single race and their inevitable Hanification over thousands of years. Unlike

earlier narratives, those that emerged from WWII emphasized commonality of origins and blending of cultures in the history of the Chinese nation.

Under the PRC, Han remained the officially recognized majority while minorities multiplied tenfold. What had been races at the turn of the century and clans in *China's Destiny* were now *shaoshu minzu*, the “minority nationalities,” alternately referred to as ethnic groups. Although the PRC actively combated the legacy of “Han chauvinism” by declaring equality among the nationalities, ironically Maoism, or the Chinese take on Marxism, accepted Han as the vanguard of social evolution, a standard by which to judge minority development.

In post-Mao China Fei Xiaotong, who had assisted with the minority identification project in the 1950s, attempted to overcome the divisive ethnic taxonomy he had helped devise for the state by formulating a unifying narrative suspiciously similar to *China's Destiny* from four decades earlier. In his *duoyuan yiti*, or “many roots, one body” metaphor, Fei too depicted many peoples coming together over time to form a single Chinese nation. And like Chiang’s narrative, Fei also saw the Han as an absorptive center that attracted outside groups, growing larger like a snowball. But rather than using the Yellow Emperor as national progenitor, Fei described how Huaxia, predecessors of the Han and early inhabitants of the Central Plain, had in their development both absorbed from other groups and *contributed to* other groups, so that none were pure in terms of biology or blood lineage. Whereas for revolutionaries Han and barbarians transcend time as discrete groups, for Chiang and Fei Chinese history is rife with migrations, intermarriage, trade and other interactions that converted many peoples into a single united nation.

The PRC adopted Fei's narrative as the official national autobiography. Although the story of the Han began over a century ago with the Yellow Emperor, subsequent revisions gradually erased him from the narrative. In fact, Han as race—the idea of the Han as a pure lineage or biological construct—is gone. The five races have vanished, replaced instead by fifty-six ethnic groups now united as one people. Nearly a century ago Sun Yat-sen attempted to shift primary identification and loyalty from ethnonationalism (Hanism) to a more cosmopolitan statist nationalism that sought to blend and integrate China's various groups into a single *zhonghua minzu*. While the PRC has come closer to achieving this than Sun did, the *White Papers of the Chinese Government* make it clear that even today Han ethnocentrism has not entirely died out—Han is still the protagonist in the national narrative.

Beyond the PRC, however, alternative narratives exist in the Chinese communities of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao. The PRC claims that all three are integral and inalienable parts of “One China,” yet in each region the state categorizes its population differently and each maintains its own term for the “Chinese” majority—*Huayi* in Macao, *Huaren* in Hong Kong, “Taiwanese” in Taiwan, and *Hanzu* in the PRC. All four recognize a different majority, and all construct that majority differently, a reflection of their divergent visions of the Chinese nation. Discussions with individuals in these four regions suggest that popular views largely coincide with official views and so differ across political borders.

## **Disappearance of the Han?**

In the modern configuration of nation-states, institutions create and enforce official identities. Governments promote “nationality” based on state citizenship for use in an international context, while within the state institutions oblige us to assume a particular racial or ethnic affiliation. Official identities, those printed on paper and stamped in passports, seem universally accepted and therefore go largely unquestioned. The very act of acceptance and use gives them credence and ensures their perpetuation. In reality human diversity resembles refracted light rather than labeled boxes—within the chromatic range we can distinguish each color, yet the spectrum lacks any sharp divisions. Dividing people into groups is rather like drawing lines in this spectrum to separate one color from another. Such artificial borders distract from the free blending of each color into the next, creating instead an illusion of uniformity within and difference without. Likewise the established schemes of human taxonomy represent a false objectification of humanity—the very essence of subjectivity.

This artificiality becomes clear with a critical examination of how such borders are demarcated, a process that ultimately relies on unrealistic ideals. In 1933 the notorious Races of Mankind exhibit mounted by the Field Museum in Chicago featured over one hundred bronze sculptures, each statue ostensibly representing one of the world’s races. Apparently the figure representing “Chinese” was modeled on Hu Shi. The curator of the exhibit maintained that the sculptures were “the result of careful selection

of subject and long anthropological study,” yet thirty years later the exhibit was dismantled and any pretense at being “scientific” was disavowed.<sup>542</sup>

Likewise Sun and the revolutionaries believed Han to be the archetypal Chinese, biologically, culturally, and otherwise; yet the notion that any single individual, let alone a group, can represent the quintessence or standard of Chineseness is simply a platonic ideal that no living individual or group could possibly personify.<sup>543</sup> Over time, as narratives changed, the pure Han imagined by revolutionaries was contaminated by revisions that introduced mutability, intermarriage, and migrations. Today the revolutionary ideal is so altered and diluted that Han has become virtually meaningless, as attested to by the survey of popular conceptions in the PRC. The emergence and persistence of Han identity is due to its serviceability or functionality, but as Han lacks import outside of the PRC, and within the PRC the narrative is moving in the direction of blending and integrating to the point of erasure, one wonders whether in the future Han will become obsolete and gradually disappear entirely from future narratives much like the Yellow Emperor himself.

On February thirteenth of 2007, the Shanghai Evening News carried a headline reading “Pure Han No Longer Exist.”<sup>544</sup> After noting Han population demographics, the piece rhetorically asks what the basis for Han identity is if not in blood. The article went on to report that a professor at Lanzhou University had just completed a monumental DNA study of migrations in the northwest. After challenging conventional beliefs that

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<sup>542</sup> Tracy Lang Teslow, “Reifying Race” in Sharon Macdonald, ed. *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, and Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

<sup>543</sup> For a succinct deconstruction of Chinese, see Tu Wei-ming, *The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), vii.

<sup>544</sup> 李宁源, “中国人种迁徙解密 纯种汉族人已不存在” 新闻晚报 2007-2-13.

Han are more concentrated in the Central Plains and descended from the Yellow Emperor,  
Professor Xie suggests that

Han are only people who, in a certain time period, were differentiated by region. Moreover this ethnic group is not specifically defined; it was only established to distinguish itself from surrounding periphery. Therefore, following changes in China's history, even though [Han were] previously precisely defined as inhabitants of the Hanzu territory, still large-scale migrations occurred. Due to military service, evading war, and other factors, Han were always migrating southward... The non-existence of a pure Han ethnic people in China is related to long-term, large-scale migrations of peoples.

The study then concluded that “any pure Han people actually do not exist in China, and with DNA analysis even the concept of Hanzu will cease to exist.”

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- FGA Archives of the Freer Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. From the Freer Gallery Field Expedition Records, SIA accession # 02-051.
- IHP Archives of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan. 中央研究院歷史語言研究所檔案 *Zhong yang yan jiu yuan li shi yu yan yan jiu suo dang an*.

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