Ways *of* Being ETHNIC in Southwest China

STEVAN HARRELL

1 / Some Ethnic Displays

INTERVIEWING IN A LIPUO VILLAGE, 1988

My research collaborators, mostly graduate students from Sichuan University in Chengdu, were a bit disappointed with our preliminary visit in 1988 to the Yi village of Yishala on the Yunnan border south of Panzhihua City. It was, they said, *tai Han hua*, "too Hanified." People there wore ordinary Chinese peasant clothes, lived in four-sided houses with central courtyards, and spoke fluent Chinese, even though they called themselves Lipuo and their daily conversation was usually in the Libie language, classified by linguists as belonging to the Central Dialect of the Yi Branch of the Tibeto-Burman family (Bradley 1998).

When we returned to the village for a two-week stay, there were weddings almost daily because it was the winter slack season immediately preceding the Chinese New Year. At one of these, we learned, a bride from the Mao lineage would be marrying into a Na family, and we asked about the origin of the two lineages.

"We Mao," they said, "come from Anfu County, Ji'an Prefecture, Jiangxi Province,[1] and our original ancestor was sent to the Southwest as part of a military detachment in the eleventh year of Kangxi [1672]. Our ancestors first came to nearby Dayao County and then moved to the current village site after a generation or two." The Maos have a genealogy, written entirely in the language of the majority Han Chinese, though they think that earlier on they might have had documents written in some sort of Yi script.

Surprised at the east-China origin of the Maos, I asked several men whether there were any Yizu (people of the Yi ethnic group) in Jiangxi today. Some said there must be some, but others thought that perhaps their ancestors were originally Han who had become Yi after moving here and marrying local

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1. Anfu County existed until the Republican period. Ji'an Prefecture still exists, with its current seat at Ji'an County (Xie Shouchang 1931: 308; Ditu Ji 1983: 15).

women. One said he would very much like to go to Jiangxi and see if he could find any Yi.

The Qi lineage, by contrast, traces its origin to Nanjing, and the Na lineage to Huguang.

A VISIT FROM CENTRAL TV, 1994

It was an atypically cold evening in November 1994 in the valley-bottom city of Xichang (pop. 180,000), capital of Liangshan Prefecture, when former vice-prefect Bamo Erha (a Yi, or Nuosu) came to meet me and Martin Schoenhals, another American anthropologist resident in town, in the lobby of the shabbily luxurious Liangshan Hotel. A dinner was planned for a film-and-sound crew from Central Television Studios (Zhongyang Dianshi Tai) in Beijing, who had come to Liangshan to finish filming the documentary *Daughters of the Bamo Family* (Bamo jia de nüermen), to be broadcast as part of a national TV news-magazine a few weeks hence.

At the meal in the heated banquet room on the ground floor of the hotel, attended by various Nuosu dignitaries including a cardiac surgeon, the term "Yizu" was more in evidence than in any conversation I have ever engaged in. The meal was mostly ordinary Sichuanese cooking, but with the vital supplements of *mgemo* (bitter-buckwheat pancakes) and two kinds of boiled meat, known in the Han language as *tuotuo rou*, but in Nuosu simply as *yuoshe* (mutton) and *voshe* (pork). When eating was underway, the hotel help—young women in "hundred pleated" full skirts with horizontal stripes, elaborately appliquéd blouses, silver jewelry, and fancy embroidered headpieces (and also, since this was Xichang, makeup and medium heels)—burst in with red-yellow-black lacquered trays bearing matching shot glasses filled with expensive Sichuanese Wuliang Ye liquor and began singing, joined by the local guests:

> Su-mu di-vi wo
> Qo-bo go la su . . .
>
> [Guests from afar
> Come as friends . . .]

After a round of drinks, the waitresses sang the Chinese translation

> Yuan dao de gui bin
> Si fang de pengyou . . .

Another round. Then, not much later, another tray of glasses, and the assertion from the waitresses that

> Yizu you yiju hua shuo,
> "Zou lu yao yong shuang tui zou;
> He jiu yao he shuang bei jiu"
>
> [The Yi have a saying that goes,
> "When you walk, you should walk with a pair of legs;
> When you drink, you should drink a pair of cups"],

and so on through the evening. Even the two foreigners in attendance were trotted out to show how much they knew of Yi language and culture, for the rather overwhelmed but still good-natured Han guests from the capital.

The next two days the crew would spend filming Vice-Prefect Bamo's eldest daughter, Bamo Ayi, a fieldwork collaborator of mine and a professor at the Nationalities University in Beijing, out in the villages being an ethnologist and being Yi. The following December 13, the day before I left Chengdu to return home, I turned on the TV in my hotel room and was startled to find it broadcasting *Daughters of the Bamo Family*. I thought it rather superficial.

A WEDDING OF HAN AND ZANG, 1993

This wedding—most of it, at least—seemed very familiar to me, similar to those I had experienced in Han-Chinese communities in Taiwan and even closer to those I had seen a few years before in the Lipuo community of Yishala. In Yanyuan County, in the southwest corner of Liangshan Prefecture, I was attending a wedding between a groom who was Zang (a term only precariously translatable as "Tibetan") because of his mother, and a bride who was unequivocally Han.

I had spent the past few days beginning to try to unravel the complex web of ethnicity in Baiwu, a little town of about a thousand people divided among five different *minzu*, or state-determined ethnic categories. As far as I could tell, one of these groups, called Zang in local Han-language parlance, Ozzu when speaking Nuosu, or Yi, and Prmi in their own language (insofar as any of them spoke it anymore) was nothing like Tibetan, having been classified in the Qiang branch of Tibeto-Burman, related closely to such other languages as Qiang, Nameze, Gyalrong, Ersu, and Duoxu, but only distantly to Tibetan. I had been in their houses and seen a floor plan that seemed to link them to various other

local groups, but which was not much like those I had seen in pictures of Tibet, or even of the Khams area, usually thought to be "Tibetan," in western Sichuan. I had spoken with these people about their knowledge of Buddhism, and it was practically nonexistent. They claimed to have scriptures, written in Tibetan, but somehow nobody could ever find them. The rituals they performed in their homes honored a series of mountain and earth deities that seemed to be elements of a purely local tradition. Their clothes were not only unlike those of any Tibetans I had ever seen but were identical to those of two other groups in the same town: one clan that was classified in the Naxi *minzu*, and another single household, recently immigrant from elsewhere in the county, which called itself Naze in its own language but was also known as Ozzu in Nuosu and was called Meng (precariously translatable as "Mongolian") when speaking Chinese.

Out to deconstruct, nay to destroy, the simplistic errors of the Chinese state project of *minzu shibie*, or "ethnic classification," or more officially, "nationalities identification," I was stopped in my tracks in the courtyard where the wedding feast was being set out on low, square wooden tables, surrounded by benches, as one could see in Han or Yi communities anywhere in Yunnan or the nearby borderlands belonging to Sichuan. A drunken old man, dressed in ragged clothes with a large, dusty, faded turban around his head, was talking to me, the foreigner. Figuring, I suppose, that I did not speak any of the local languages very well, he pointed to his own painted nose and resorted to a sort of baby-talk: "Zangzu—Dalai Lama . . . Zangzu—Dalai Lama."

STOPPING IN A WOODYARD, 1993

The trip—nine Jeeps, thirty-some cadres of every local *minzu* but Han, six days of dusty roads and colorful maidens, several scenic wonders and one hot-springs bath—had landed us in the overflow yard of a logging camp, with no place to go and nothing to do but sit on rotted or otherwise unusable timber and talk ethnohistory.[2] While the cadres who made a difference were meeting somewhere, deciding how to divvy up the profits from one of China's last old-growth forests, I decided to talk to Mr. Fu, a vice-chair of the People's Consultative Conference for Ninglang County, Yunnan, right across the provincial border from Yanyuan, and a self-appointed spokesman for the Pumi people.

Mr. Fu was anxious to tell me about the history of the Pumi, who he thought probably came originally from what is now Qinghai but who had been in the

2. For an extended account of this trip as an idealized display of the New China as a multi-ethnic nation, see Harrell 1996b.

area of southwestern Liangshan for nearly two thousand years at minimum. His authority was "the *Hou Han shu* of Sima Qian" (*sic*),[3] which records a song sung by the king of Bailang, somewhere in the Southwest, at an imperial court banquet in Luoyang. Linguists, said Mr. Fu, had demonstrated that the language recorded was that of the Pumi, whose history therefore went back to that distant period.

Mr. Fu was, however, unconcerned that people in Sichuan who spoke the same language as he, practiced the same customs, and called themselves Prmi in their own language were classified as Zang rather than as Pumi. It stemmed, he said, from the local politics of the early 1950s, when the king of Muli—who was both abbot of a Gelug-pa monastery (and thus religiously subordinate to the Dalai Lama in Lhasa) and a *tusi* (local native ruler) enfeoffed by the Qing empire and allowed to continue in office under the Chinese Republic—had thrown in his lot with the Communists in return for making Muli into a Zang autonomous county that was part of Sichuan. In Ninglang, where there was no equivalent Prmi local official, the Prmi had remained "unclassified" until the late 1950s but through the good offices of Premier Zhou Enlai were eventually classified as a separate *minzu*. His Pumi and the Zang across the border in Sichuan cooperated just fine, he told me; in fact, even in my own area of scholarship, he was hoping to organize a local Center for the Study of Pumi History and Culture, and the Party secretary of Muli Zang Autonomous County in Sichuan had already agreed to contribute some timber revenues to the effort.

A WELCOMING PARTY, 1994

It had been a rather hard hike. I, the Westerner, was as usual carrying too much stuff, and it was a warm day and we had seven hundred meters to climb. Two teenage girls were scouting our arrival just around the corner from the mountain slope that is the seat of the headquarters of Dapo Mengguzu (in English, that usually comes out "Mongolian") Township, in the eastern part of Yanyuan County, and they ran ahead when they saw us, to tell everybody to get ready. As we marched into the little town, firecrackers started going off, and then we were between two long lines of schoolchildren and villagers, who chanted (in the Han language) as we went, "Huanying, huanying . . . relie

3. Sima Qian, of course, was author not of the *Hou Han shu* (History of the latter Han dynasty) but of the *Shi ji* (Records of the historian), written about three hundred years earlier. The primary author of the *Hou Han shu* was Fan Ye. This passage does in fact exist in the *Hou Han shu* (chap. 11).

huanying" (Welcome, welcome, heartily welcome). Up a slope, along a ledge, into a courtyard, and soon we were met by women in plain-colored skirts bearing large bowls of delicious, lukewarm beer. Since they were Mengguzu, they should have gotten *chiong* (as they call it in their own language), or *huang jiu* (in Chinese), they apologized, but it wasn't so common around those parts, so beer would have to do. After that hike, it did just fine.

Red papers with black writing on them adorned the walls and doorways of the school and the township government buildings; the slogans of welcome and celebration were in both Chinese and Mongolian, though only one local man, a schoolteacher, could sound out the letters of the latter. At the official ceremony the next day, the township Party secretary, resplendent in something resembling a Mongolian robe, or *deel*, presided in front of a framed message of congratulations on the establishment of the Mengguzu township in 1984. It had been given by the People's Government of Yikezhao League, in Western Inner Mongolia, and although it was written entirely in Chinese, it featured a silver leaping horse and a picture of crowds on a sunny day in front of Chinggis Khan's mausoleum in the Ordos (Khan 1995). I was told by the township head that although the language spoken here in Dapo (called Mengyu in Chinese or Naru in the local language) was superficially unlike that of Inner Mongolia, it really was 70 percent the same as the language of Western Inner Mongolia, at least. According to linguists, it too is a member of the Tibeto-Burman family (though its closer affiliations with one or another branch are disputed) and completely unrelated to Mongolian.

TWO CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ETHNICITY,
1988 AND 1994

It was already hot, even though it was only mid-morning when we completed our daily forty-minute trek through rice fields and banana trees from the Han Catholic village of Jingtang (Scripture Hall), where we were staying, to the minority village of Zhuangshang across an eroded streambed flowing into the Jinsha River. We were conducting interviews about household structure and economy. About 80 percent of the population of the village of Zhuangshang belongs to a group that called itself Laluo in its own language, back a few decades when anybody spoke it, and whose Han name was still in dispute in 1988. The household registration records, for example, had originally listed people's *minzu* affiliation as Shuitian, and in ordinary conversation in the Han language (the only language most of them knew) they continued to refer to themselves as Shuitianzu, or, perhaps more commonly, simply as *minzu*, a term that con-

trasted with Hanzu. The government, however, had recently determined that they were Yi, and the indication in the household registration records had been crossed out and written over to reflect this decision.

Ms. Hu Guanghui, a very helpful and intelligent middle-school graduate from the village, led me to my first household for the day, and I sat down on a wooden bench in the shade of the courtyard and got out my four-color ball-point pen and my printed household questionnaire. I stood to greet the host, an uncle of Ms. Hu's, and he, seemingly already in his cups, although it was early in the day, greeted me perfunctorily, sat down on the other end of the bench, and pronounced, "When Old Man Mao [Mao Laoye] was alive, everybody recognized that we were *minzu*. Now that we have Old Man Deng, nobody recognizes that we are *minzu* anymore."

Mr. Hu's resentment was shared at the time by many other villagers with whom our research team spoke—they could not see why they, as a separate group of people, who were here first after all, had to be lumped in with the Yi (Nuosu), who were nothing but savages in the mountains with whom the local people had nothing in common. The village was poor, and the dispute about ethnicity was only one of the many beefs the local people had with the government.

In 1994 I paid a brief visit to Zhuangshang again and interviewed a local team leader. He regaled me for over an hour with success stories—tripling of household income, installation of electricity and running water in every household, a solution to their long-standing irrigation-water shortage, the possibility of developing commercial mango and pomegranate crops. But he simply would not be engaged in the question of the name of the local group. Yes, they were minorities; yes, they called themselves Shuitian; yes, it was alright to call them Yi—they were certainly a branch of the Yi.

THE CONTEXT OF THE DISPLAYS

All the preceding stories relate to the ways people present themselves as ethnic citizens in the southernmost parts of Sichuan Province and the immediately bordering areas of Yunnan, in southwest China. I conducted field research relating to the questions of ethnic relations in this area for three months each in 1988, 1993, and 1994, with brief visits in 1991, 1996, and 1998 also. This book is an attempt to make sense out of these presentations of self and the discourses of local, national, and global relations to which the presentations are directed.

When I first wrote, in a very formulaic and simplistic manner, about the specific local contexts of ethnic relations in this area (Harrell 1990), I ended up by paraphrasing the former U.S. house speaker Tip O'Neill, proclaiming

that "all ethnicity is local." Like O'Neill discussing politics, I suspect, I was speaking a half-truth to emphasize a point. All ethnicity *is* local, in the sense that every person who considers him or herself a member of an ethnic collectivity does so in the context of interaction in a local community. But at the same time, all ethnicity, like all politics, is not *just* local. People in the modern world of nation-states are members of nationally—and often internationally—defined ethnic collectivities of which their local communities are a part, and the dialectical interaction between local, national, and cosmopolitan discourses is what shapes their lives as ethnic citizens of modern nations.

Southwest China is one of the places where such dialectical interaction and level-jumping between local and national is at its most involved and complex. Unlike Xinjiang, for example, or the Tibet Autonomous Region, boundaries here are contingent, shifting, negotiated; ethnicity in one context is not necessarily congruent with ethnicity in another; contexts shift over space and time and particularly from one language to another. Everybody here is Chinese in a citizenship sense; there is no question of an independent Yi or Pumi or Shuitian nation, but ethnic relations are vitally important in peoples' lives for many purposes. These include psychological self-understanding, the preservation or undermining of governmental and imagined national order, and the distribution of resources as varied as mining claims, admissions to teachers colleges, and birth-control quotas.

At the most basic level of understanding, then, it matters, in almost all contexts, what one's ethnic identity is. At one greater level of complexity, it may not matter in the same way in each context. But even this is too simple. To approach anything like realistic understanding of the phenomena, we must go to a still more complex level and understand that even though ethnicity matters differently in different contexts, the ways it matters in one context affect the ways it matters in others.

To approach this kind of realistic understanding of ethnicity and ethnic identity in context, one must combine field and documentary research. Documents reflect one context of understanding—official policy and the principles for its implementation on the local level. They do more than simply present an ideal or a sanitized version of reality; they also dictate categories that are used in scholarly discourse and in such real situations as meetings and the writing of reports. Anthropologists too often make the mistake of discounting the kinds of formulaic or categorical understanding found in official and scholarly documents, replacing it entirely with knowledge gathered in field research. Several parts of this book rely heavily on documentary sources, since these sources define certain kinds of understanding of ethnic relations, particularly what I

call the official discourse of ethnic identification and the scholarly discourse of ethnohistory. The way that these two discourses interact with each other, the way ethnicity matters differently in each of them and in the interaction between them, is a key component of the analysis of ethnicity in Liangshan.

At the same time, however, this is primarily an anthropological account. Most of the data and most of the analytical positions taken in this book stem from the notes that I took during three long seasons of field research in Liangshan. The primary context in which this book approaches ethnicity is the context of the daily lives of local communities and their leaders, and the primary purpose of my argument is to show how ethnicity matters in this local context, along with the way this context interacts with those of the two official discourses carried out in meetings and documents. Without fieldwork, the most important leg of this triangle of discourses would be missing.

My own fieldwork in the People's Republic of China (PRC), however, has not conformed to the traditional anthropological paradigm of an extended stay in one place, or even to the more recent method of an extended investigation of a community defined by something other than kinship or locality. Nor has my work conformed to the usual anthropological practice of a single researcher dealing with data collection independent of local authorities or local scholars. Rather, this study, from the beginning, has been both regional and collaborative. I have traveled to many communities in Liangshan, visiting some of them for an hour or a day or two; some for a few days or weeks. I know no place intimately; I know a moderate amount about a large number of places. The disadvantage of this kind of nontraditional approach is that, even more than usual in the fieldwork experience, there is undoubtedly much important and relevant information that passed me by in every single place. The advantage is that I have not been tempted to take any particular place as typical, but have tried to cover as wide a range as possible, a strategy that has shaped the most central point of this book's argument: namely, that ethnicity in one locality is different from ethnicity in another, even if ethnicity in both places is shaped by the same triangle of discourses.

While the research for this book has been regional, it has also been collaborative. From January through March 1988, I was one of six members of a field research team officially affiliated with the Southern Silk Road Project, directed by Professor Tong Enzheng of Sichuan University. The primary object of investigation was family economy in three Yi villages and one Han village; I discovered the problem of ethnicity when I went to Yishala and found that the villagers were "*tai Han hua.*" During the whole time, I was monitored very closely by as many as five different agencies of the Panzhihua city government,

and permission to conduct the research at all was contingent on cultivating good relations not only with local scholars but with cadres and bureaucrats as well. The whole project, in fact, was dependent upon the goodwill and tireless energy of Mr. Deng Yaozong of the municipal Artifact Bureau in Panzhihua; in order to go to the Nuosu village of Gaoping, for example, which was in an area closed to foreigners, we had to go together to the home of a vice-mayor of Panzhihua Municipality, unofficially to bring New Year greetings. Even after he approved the research, we had to promise not to do any research away from a road (fortunately, the Chinese word *lu* refers to trails as well as roads). After the research was finished, we had to report results to the municipal authorities.

For further research from January through March 1993, and from October to December 1994, I continued my collaboration with the Panzhihua Artifact Bureau but expanded to the Sichuan Provincial Nationalities Research Institute and the Liangshan Prefecture Nationalities Research Institute, both also government organs. My research with Ma Erzi in Yanyuan County in 1993 was possible because of his good relations with County Party Secretary Yang Zipuo, and because of Secretary Yang's open-minded attitude. Both the political climate toward foreigners and my own familiarity to local people had improved by this time, and there were fewer restrictions and requirements. Still, moving in on my own would have been impossible. In 1994 I continued these same collaborations and began to work closely with Professor Bamo Ayi of Central Nationalities University. This period of research was even easier. For our nine days in Manshuiwan, I did not even need official clearance, since Manshuiwan lies in Mianning County, long open to foreigners because of the satellite launching base there. Still, I will not forget when I asked Secretary Yang if I could go to Guabie, a remote area without roads that would have been totally off-limits to foreigners a few years earlier. His answer was, "Take care you don't get hurt."

This kind of close collaboration with officials and officially employed scholars brings with it an obligation to one's official and scholarly hosts, added on top of the obligations to the subjects of one's research. These may at times conflict with each other; the only defense is to think things through with professional ethics in mind. At the same time, there is also a danger of one's being co-opted to the scholarly views of one's collaborators, even if one has not acted unethically with regard to the research subjects (AAA 1976, Hsieh 1987). The views of ethnicity in the local context presented in this book are the views that emerged from conversations between me, my collaborators, local elites, and a less-than-representative sample of common people. All these people's views—particularly the views of my closest field collaborators, Ma Erzi and Bamo Ayi—have influenced mine. A different set of conversations might have revealed still

different views; this would have happened with different collaborators as well as with different fieldsites. But I still think that the views expressed here are diverse enough to illustrate the contextual nature of ethnic identity; more views would reinforce that point but not substantially change it.

At the same time, collaboration has its advantages, and not only on the practical plane. The scholars and many of the officials and teachers I have worked with are thoughtful, dedicated, highly knowledgeable people, many of them possessed of an insider's knowledge that no foreign researcher could hope to match. I think that if it had been possible to conduct independent field research, I would have learned far less about Liangshan, its people, and their ethnic identity. And a very important result of this collaboration has been that many of the people I first met in field research have become my close friends and colleagues.

Finally, there is the language question. I speak standard Chinese (Mandarin, sometimes referred to in this book as the "Han language") very fluently; understand Sichuanese and Yunnanese accents to various degrees, but usually fairly well; and I can carry on simple conversations in Nuosu. I know no Prmi or Naze. This is not an ideal linguistic apparatus for a serious fieldworker, and it has meant a further reliance on my collaborators.

This short introduction to a long book does not have room for serious and detailed examination of the intellectual and ethical issues raised by regional, collaborative research. A forthcoming volume by Bamo Ayi, Ma Erzi, and myself will address these in great detail from three different perspectives. In the meantime, the data presented and the arguments made must be the standard by which the reader judges the work.

I begin with some general considerations about ethnicity and about Chinese history in chapters 2 and 3, give a brief historical overview of the Liangshan area in chapter 4, and present a series of case studies illustrating different ways of being ethnic in chapters 5 through 14. Chapter 15 assesses the significance of these observations.

2 / Foundations of Ethnic Identity

Ethnic relations in Liangshan, complex as they are, are further complicated by the relationship between the local ethnic groups of the region and the projects of the Chinese state and the putative Chinese nation. Because the daily lives of the people—Nuosu, Prmi, Naze, Han, and others—are so embroiled in China, we need to make a few initial observations about what this China is that they are embroiled in. In order to do that, in turn, we need to place modern China and its ethnic relations in comparative historical and global perspective.

COLLECTIVITIES IN HUMAN SOCIETIES

Pre-State Societies and the Universality of Collectivities

Perceptions of difference—of culture, language, territory, kinship, and physiognomy—have been a feature of relationships between human groups as long as there have been societies. It seems clear, from ethnographic as well as historical evidence, that humans, living in one place and associating with a particular group of people, readily and universally classify humanity into selves and others, attributing to the others different ways of doing things, different ways of talking, different places where they ought to be, different relations of kinship and descent, and different looks.[1]

As far as we can tell by modern ethnographic analogy, in the period of human history before the origin of the state these culturally distinctive groups were not subject to larger social and political entities, and thus were not in competition with each other for resources allocated by some central political power. Neither were they part of any division of labor built on these cultural differences.

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1. The salience of the racial component—imagined (whether real or not) differences in physiognomy between different collectivities—varies greatly from extreme in the United States to rather minor in places like China or Egypt. Thus my ambivalence in including it as one aspect of collective self- and other-perception.

in that long stretch of past time between the emergence of *Homo sapiens sapiens* sometime in the Pleistocene and the emergence of the first states perhaps six thousand or eight thousand years before the present, there developed great diversity in customs, language, kinship systems, and those obvious physical characteristics we now associate with notions of race. Even into our own era of intensive investigation of other peoples and their cultures, there have persisted parts of the earth where local collectivities distinguish themselves according to language, territory, and customs but are not part of any larger political unit with power over the members of the local collectivities. We can take, for example, the interior of New Guinea, inhabited according to archaeologists for at least thirty thousand years and farmed for nine thousand (Lilley 1992), where people spoke a huge variety of mutually unintelligible idioms, where they called each other and themselves by a series of distinctive names for social groups (such as Etoro, Bosavi, and Onambasulu on the Great Papuan Plateau, or Fore, Jate, and Usurufa in the Eastern Highlands), and where the social groups had continuous or sporadic relationships of intermarriage, alliance, and military hostility. Similar examples can be found on the North American Plains in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, or in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa outside the influence of West-African states.

Here, clearly, are ethnic differences in their most embryonic form. Members of one collectivity, by virtue of speaking the same language, being demonstrably related by descent and marriage, practicing the same customs, living in the same place, and perhaps believing that they look somewhat alike, differentiate themselves from those folks in the next valley, who are not closely related to the people here, and who talk, act, and maybe look funny. They often have stories about how different "peoples" originated at the beginning of the world or some more recent time, and they more often than not think that their own way of speaking, acting, and looking is both inherited from their ancestors (and thus immutable) and superior to those of their neighbors (and thus desirable). They may intermarry or not, and relations with them may be peaceful or warlike, or may shift between the two.

Such relationships have both an internal and an external aspect. Internally, there are the characteristics that group members perceive that they hold in common with one another, and externally, there are the corresponding characteristics that group members conceive differentiate them from members of other groups. These characteristics, both internal and external, are primarily of two sorts: cultural and kin-based. Cultural characteristics are paradigmatic in the Saussurian sense: they include ideas of similarity within the group and of difference from people outside the group, in all the areas listed above. Kin char-

acteristics, on the other hand, are syntagmatic: they include relatedness by descent and marriage among members of the group, and the lack of relatedness by descent or marriage between one group and another. The relative importance of inclusive or exclusive criteria of kinship or culture varies greatly from one set of intercommunity relations to another, but the presence of this kind of distinguishing criteria is pervasive in human societies.

In a nonstate society, this is about all there is to it. There is no ruling organization to confer or withhold people's rights according to their membership in one cultural-linguistic-local-racial-kin collectivity or another; there is no ruling class to appropriate surplus and aggrandize status; there is no written language that becomes a key to status and power, and if there is a lingua franca that enables people to communicate with one another, it carries no particular prestige. And, as Lévi-Strauss has pointed out (1966: 232), there is usually no sense of history as a series of changes that have led to the present. In other words, the goods that are in perennial short supply in any social system—power, wealth, and prestige—may be differentially distributed among collectivities, but this is not done by any central or overriding political organization.

Nevertheless, I think it is mistaken to draw too wide a line between cultural-local-linguistic-racial-kin collectivities in non-state systems, and such collectivities as they operate after the development and imposition of state power. The majority of the *bases* of differentiation—language, culture, territory, kinship, physiognomy—were there already in New Guinea or the Amazon or the North American plains in the absence of state systems. It is the *specific manner* in which these bases of differentiation are *used* that changes when the state appears, and changes again when the state takes the form of the modern nation-state.

Collectivities as Subordinate to the State

With the emergence of states in the last few millennia, these preexisting human proclivities to differentiate one's own from other people by means of similarities and differences in language, culture, physiognomy, common kinship, and territorial affiliation began to intersect with the increasing division of labor that is the development of social classes and the state, and thus the differences began to make a different kind of difference—they began to determine, or at least influence, the allocation of prestige, power, and wealth in a situation where prestige, power, and wealth were much less evenly distributed than in the prestate situation.

As far as we know, the first states to form (what Fried [1967] calls "pristine states") were rather local affairs, and most of them probably involved, at their

core, members of only one local-linguistic-cultural collectivity, led by members of one or a series of allied kinship groups. The first states to form in north China, for example, the Shang in the mid-second millennium B.C.E. and perhaps the Xia a few hundred years earlier,[2] seem to have been based around alliances of a few powerful clans. These early, kin-based states were probably too small to contain many different cultural-linguistic collectivities, but within only a few centuries their territories expanded greatly—the Shang by the time of its conquest by the Zhou in 1049 B.C.E. probably directly controlled a territory on the order of magnitude of a modern Chinese province and a population in the hundreds of thousands (David N. Keightley, personal communication). When states such as this expand, neighboring peoples in the same region, who were not part of the collectivity that originally formed the state, come under the state's influence and must react to the threat that the state expansion poses. It seems to me that the neighboring collectivity can react in one of four ways:

1. It can imitate its threatening neighbors and form a state of its own, probably based on the same kind of clan alliance and rule. As a result, the territory will have two states rather than one. The Zhou, for example, may well have developed a state in imitation of, and to counter a threat from, the Shang; later the whole of what is now China proper[3] was occupied by states formed in this way. I call this process *imitation*.

2. It can organize itself in a more formal manner than before, giving explicit political power to certain leaders, rationalizing its political and military structure, and formalizing the rules of kinship, succession, and marriage, but stopping short of full state organization. The result is that the core of the region, perhaps the most populous and economically productive part, continues to be organized as a state, while the peripheral, less populous, and less productive parts become tribes, in the narrow sense of that word. This appears to have happened with many of the steppe peoples of Central Asia in reaction to the consolidation of Chinese state rule in the immediate pre-Imperial and

2. There has been considerable controversy over the existence and timing of the Xia dynasty, which according to traditional historiography preceded the Shang, but now looks as if it overlapped in time, if it existed at all. See Chang 1980: 335–55.

3. This is a term I hope will get revived in the current debates over national identity in China. The area I am thinking of includes all or part of each of the eighteen provinces of the Qing (though not some peripheral areas of some of those provinces, particularly in the Southwest), and probably also the three northeastern provinces, although those retain, in Western languages only, the ethnic designation Manchuria.

from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries (Jennings 1984) was a similar process of *tribalization* in reaction to the incursion of state power in the form of European colonies.

3. It can be conquered or otherwise overcome and absorbed without much trace into the polity of the expanding state. Language, customs, and even physiognomy may retain traces of the former difference from the central norm, but descendants of members of the previously different cultural-linguistic-local unit come first to deny and then to forget them, voluntarily or involuntarily assuming totally the culture and language of the rulers, though perhaps as individuals initially retaining lower status in the society. Much of what is now south China has undergone this process of *assimilation*; people whose ancestors were unequivocally something else are now nothing but Chinese (Brown 1996).

4. It can be incorporated into the political structure of the state, but with a separate and distinct (and usually lower) status from that of the original subjects of the state rulers. Language, customs, religion, endogamy, separate territory, and sometimes race clearly distinguish the incorporated protoethnic group from the rulers and their cultural group at the center. The result of this process of *ethnicization* is an empire—a state and territory that include different peoples, as those are defined by the preexisting (but sometimes altered or even reemphasized) differences in language, customs, and so forth. Empires, of course, have existed in many parts of the world since the first millennium B.C.E.

These four processes are all characteristic of the expansion and strengthening of state power that has been the main trend in human history for the past few millennia. They may, of course, succeed one another temporally in a particular region: the inhabitants of the central Yangzi Valley, for example, may first have undergone tribalization (records are scanty) but certainly imitated the states to the north in the middle of the first millennium B.C.E., then were incorporated into the Chinese empire, almost certainly by ethnicization, in Qin (221–206 B.C.E.) and Han (206 B.C.E.-220 C.E.) times, and then were slowly assimilated until they became "nothing but Chinese" since at least the Tang dynasty (618–907). In a different sequence, steppe-dwellers of Central Asia tribalized over a thousand years ago were ethnicized into the Russian Empire and had their ethnic identity consolidated and strengthened under Soviet rule, only to experience a process of imitative nationalism with the breakup of the Soviet Union and the formation of the independent -stans in the 1990s.

reversible. States may revert to tribal polities or even to collections of independent villages when external pressure goes away or when demography collapses. Ethnic groups incorporated into empires may aspire to or achieve political independence, either as states or as nonstate polities. And even assimilation can be reversed if it has not gone all the way to disappearance, as when long-lost ethnic identities, such as that of the Muslim Hui of coastal Fujian (Gladney 1991: chap. 6; Fan Ke n.d.), are revived for political and/or ethnic advantage.

In none of these four processes do the cultural differences themselves lead to the status of a people as an ethnic group, a nation, or simply a category inside or outside a state polity. The existence of these cultural differences is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the formation or persistence of ethnic groups. The cultural differences need not be great—they can be something as small as the memory of a language once spoken or the consciousness of a shared history, but there must be something there for ethnic identity to build on, to serve as what we call an ethnic marker (Keyes 1996). And in addition to cultural difference, there must be a sense of relatedness as a people, an ideology of descent from common ancestors (Keyes 1976), and marriage and affinity within the group. These, too, can be put in the foreground or laid aside, but as long as they are not completely forgotten, they can become the basis for ethnic identity.

With the emergence of the state—and particularly with the development of ideology as a buttress to state power, and the use of written languages to formulate, disseminate, and preserve state ideology—a third basis for in-group solidarity and out-group exclusiveness emerges: common and divergent history. Empires and nations both (see below) depend partly on history for their legitimacy, demonstrating that the in-group has a common past, and a past different from those of the other groups with which it comes into contact. With the advent of state power and ideology, then, history is added to culture and kinship as a possible basis for group identity. The different ways in which history-, kinship-, and culture-based ethnicity interact in local contexts are the main subject of this book.

The Empire and the Nation-State

Ways of Being Ethnic in Southwest China is concerned with a particular historical sequence during which the Chinese state has included under its rule peoples who distinguish themselves from one another by the aforementioned

cultural, linguistic, territorial, and kin boundaries and share a sense of a common history and kinship, including descent from common ancestors (Keyes 1976). States that include such diversely perceived peoples are often divided into two types: empires and nation-states, with the former replaced by the latter in the last few centuries. Ernest Gellner, for example, asserts that

> there are two great types or species of the division of labour, of social structure, *both* of them being marked by very great complexity and size, but which differ radically in their implications for culture, in the manner in which they make use of culture. . . . One of these, which may be called advanced agrarian-based civilization, makes for great cultural diversity, and deploys that diversity to mark out the differential situations, economically and politically, of the various subpopulations within it. The other, which may be called growth-oriented industrial society, is strongly impelled towards cultural homogeneity within each cultural unit. (1987: 17–18)

Benedict Anderson's now-classic treatment (1983, 1991) similarly traces the process of development from the "dynastic realm," held together by divine kingship and a sacred "truth-language," to the modern nation-state, held together by ideas of citizenship and a common "national print language," the former consisting of diverse peoples bound by allegiance to the monarch and his associated clerisy, and the latter of a people with the perception that they share a common heritage and culture.

The attitudes toward cultural, linguistic, and kin-community difference are said to differ greatly in these two kinds of polities. In the empire or dynastic realm such difference is tolerated, even promoted, by state authorities, because it not only is accepted as inevitable but also facilitates both division of labor and political control in a society with a weak state and low revenue base. Examples abound in actual empires. The Ottomans, for example, minutely classified the population of their realm; Jews, Armenians, Greeks, Arabs, and Georgians each had their own religion, culture, language, territory, marital community, and, most importantly, their legally recognized position as part of the larger imperial community (Sonyel 1993, Batatu 1978).

The transition to modern Turkish nationalism under Atatürk eliminated all this qualified inclusiveness; Turkey was now the land of the Turks, who had their language (which was pointedly now written in the Roman alphabet, in contrast to the earlier Arabic one), and the minorities, though they were not entirely eliminated or assimilated, now had a problematical status: they were less than full citizens in the ideological sense that their cultural difference made

them a kind of defective Turkish citizenry, rather than members of groups that combined to make an empire (Gunter 1994). Until very recently, Kurds were often not allowed to use their written languages in schools or other public contexts, and they were considered not only defective but rebellious if they did (Gunter 1994).

The same kind of process has occurred, in even more violent ways, in many of the new states that emerged from the decolonization of Asia and Africa after World War II. In many cases a national print language has had to be constructed, if not from whole cloth, at least from quite variable threads, as with Tanzanian Swahili and Bahasa Indonesia, and myths of origin in the remote past have been the basis of what I have elsewhere called "the hiding of a history of negotiation behind a narrative of unfolding" (Harrell 1996a). In the rare case where intellectuals attempt to create a nation (necessarily including a national historical narrative) in a relatively democratic environment, as in Taiwan or Belize in the mid-'90s, there develops a real puzzlement over what the national history ought to include (Zhuang Wanshou 1996a,b; Haug 1995). In most places, however, intellectual stooges in the service of a ruling class create a narrative that serves the fictitious but compelling idea that the nation—with a *common* culture, language, kinship, territory, physiognomy, and history—is an eternal thing, and citizens can and should point to a glorious past, a proud present, and a bright future.

In many polities, of course, the attempt to impose state nationalism on a multicultural population is not entirely successful; cultural and territorial minorities who are included in the new national whole may resent and/or resist. In doing so, they also incorporate the third basis of group identity—a common history—into their identity, along with culture and kinship. When this happens, ethnic conflict is born, with results obvious today from Tibet to Bosnia to Kurdistan. But direct resistance is not the only strategy available to leaders of local minority communities. Where the state attempts to co-opt the leadership and ordinary people of minority collectivities, it may be just as possible, and much more advantageous, for elites among the minorities to co-opt state policies for local purposes, especially where the policies are less than completely assimilationist and recognize some rights to cultural and other distinctiveness on the part of the minority collectivities. This can lead to a situation in which the central authorities and local leaders are using each other for rather divergent but not directly contradictory ends. (I see this as the prevailing mode of interaction in the area described in this book.) Resistance and accommodation are, of course, not mutually exclusive strategies, and members of minority groups may use both, either simultaneously or at different

times. In either of these situations, however—resistance or accommodation—the ethnic identity of the minority people tends to be strengthened.

We must remind ourselves that the stable and rather unproblematic distinction between the ruling class and the protoethnic collectivities found in agrarian polities or empires, as well as the much more contentious distinction between the national culture and minority ethnic cultures characteristic of nation-states, are not fundamentally different from each other. Both are based on the aforementioned human universal of forming cultural, linguistic, local, and marital communities (along with, of course, other kinds of communities based on gender, age, occupation, or even artistic and musical interests). And nearly everywhere, whether in an empire, a nation-state, or even a prestate situation, members of such collectivities see themselves as being related by common descent and intermarriage (Keyes 1976; Horowitz 1985: 59), and in many cases they strengthen these feelings of commonality and difference by writing historical narratives demonstrating the inevitable unfolding of the group and its identity through time (Harrell 1996a). The difference is between the tolerance or even promotion of differences in empires and the suspicion and often attempts to eliminate them in nation-states. As Keyes points out, "Ethnicity has become a much more significant factor in social relations since the emergence of the nation-state" (1996: 153).

This distinction, however, like so many distinctions of ideal types, runs into problems when we look at actual cases. The Ottomans and Romans ran unequivocal empires, and the Turks and Italians have more recently run unequivocal nation-states in the same places, but certain cases are in-between, even at the end of the twentieth century. In other words, not all states in the contemporary world are unequivocally nation-states. The United States (whose very name connotes at least a nod toward pluralism) is riven by debate today over the extent of cultural commonality that ought to be required or expected of citizens; opponents of multiculturalism display the classical nationalist's fear that too much diversity will lead to separatism and disunity, while liberals see the United States as a political, rather than cultural, community. Muslims are now as much as 9 percent of the population of France (Tash 1997), and while the assimilationist project goes on in the schools, media, and town halls, there are voices arguing for a more pluralist society even in that locus classicus of modern nationalism. The issue of the nation-state is far from settled.

At the same time, not all state-minority relations are structured the same way, even in the same state. In the United States, for example, the relationship between the state (or the majority Euro-Americans) and Native American tribes—governed by treaty and administered territorially, and involving local

government of the Native communities—is very different from the relationship between the state or the majority and African Americans, which involves no territorial base or governmental autonomy, and whose legal aspects are more ambiguous. At the same time African Americans pose a much greater threat to state legitimacy, because of their numbers and relative power in many social contexts, than do the few remaining Natives, living mostly in remote areas. In China the nations of the northern and western periphery have a very different relationship to the state and to the Han majority than do the nonnational ethnic groups of the South, Southwest, and Northeast. The case studies in this book deal with different ways of being ethnic even *among* the southwestern groups.

THE CHINESE CASE

Nowhere does the conflict between the two models of a political system—empire and nation-state—manifest itself more acutely or more ambiguously than in the People's Republic of China. China was once an empire, though more assimilationist and thus further from the ideal type than many, and in the world of nation-states today, it explicitly proclaims itself a unified, multinational state (*tongyi duominzu guojia*, lit., "unified country of diverse nationalities"), which in many ways looks somewhat like an empire. There are "autonomous regions, prefectures, and counties" for various minority peoples; there are special dispensations in language, religion, and even childbearing, made for members of minorities; there are officially promoted attempts to glorify the culture and the history of minority "nationalities" classified according to a meticulous, "scientific" process. At the same time, all the elements of the ideal type of a nation-state as outlined by Gellner and Anderson are there: the myths of a common origin and a glorious past; the idea of sacred territory, clearly distinguished from foreign soil, to be defended with the blood of its sons and daughters; a national print-language, also taught universally in the schools; and a visceral distrust (sometimes combined with envy or even admiration) of everybody and all things foreign.

This book is to a large extent concerned with the ways in which these two models of empire and nationhood conflict with each other in the context of their interaction with local cultural, linguistic, marital, and territorial collectivities. In other words, the people of Liangshan organize a great part of their lives in terms of strongly held, sometimes unquestioned beliefs that they are members of groups that share kinship, territory, and culture. As long as there have been people in the region, they have probably held these kinds of beliefs. But even before they faced the nation-building projects of the People's

Republic, the ways these groups were constituted, the characteristics they saw themselves as holding in common, and the nature of the boundaries between themselves and other groups were all quite variable. Since the project of ethnic (or "nationalities") identification (*minzu shibie*) began in the 1950s, the beliefs and practices of all these collectivities have been partially transformed in accordance with the categories in which they emerged from the project. The categories, in terms of their commonalities and boundaries, are more similar to each other than they were previously. The members of these groups have all been incorporated, unquestionably, as citizens of the Chinese state and as members of state-defined "nationalities," or *minzu*. But the differences in the nature and boundaries of these groups have not been eradicated by the state project; there are still different ways of being ethnic in the region, and this book is about them. Before we proceed to examine in detail the ways of being ethnic in Liangshan, however, we need to review briefly the process by which China came to the contradictory juncture of being both an empire and a nation-state.

The Rise of Chinese Nationalism

In the past century and a half, China has moved from being an empire that had many characteristics of nationhood (Townsend lists "a sense of a common history, with myths of origin and descent; a distinctive written language and literary forms associated with it; some common folklore, life rituals and religious practices; and a core political elite, with a common education and orientation toward government service" [1992: 125]) to being a modern state that still has one extremely important aspect of empire: rule over diverse ethnic groups whose cultures are, officially at least, promoted and celebrated rather than repressed or denigrated.

This does not mean, however, that China has, through the turmoil of the last 150 years, simply floated somewhere in a happy compromise between Gellner's ideal types. Rather, there has been a significant transformation in the ideas about and practice of relations between the core and the periphery of regions ruled from Beijing (or, very briefly, Nanjing) or, to put it another way, between those practicing the "core culture" that we usually refer to as Chinese and those coming under their influence, or in a third formulation, between Chinese living under Chinese jurisdiction and Chinese living elsewhere. In order to understand how Liangshan came to its present predicament, we need to explore how the center-periphery relations in which Liangshan is entangled got to be the way they are.

The Chinese empire, at least during its last few periods of dynastic rule, was

characterized by a particular set of doctrines and practices that have come to be known as "Chinese culturalism" (Levenson 1968, Townsend 1992). A ruling elite defined itself and its criteria for membership not in terms of belonging to any particular kinship-and-culture collectivity, but strictly in cultural terms. Those who were able to master the principles of civilized political discourse embodied in certain texts known in the West as "Confucian classics" had the right and duty to rule. Most of those who achieved this mastery came in fact from the ethnic group of Chinese-speakers (known at least in the Qing dynasty as "Han people"),[4] but members of other ethnic collectivities, such as the Mongols of the Yuan and the Manchus of the Qing (1644–1911), could gain legitimacy in the eyes of the elite if they mastered the classical rhetoric and principles. This is why Mongols and Manchus could rule the empire and not be faced with constant, ethnic nationalist revolt.

At the same time, mastery of high culture and its consequent political and social status were hardly independent of Han ethnicity. The classical language in which not only the canonical texts but also the official documents of the Ming and Qing were written was a Han language; even though it differed greatly from any currently spoken form, it was much closer to those spoken forms than to any other language. Non-Han could and did master it—even the late Ming Jesuit Matteo Ricci seems to have come close—but it did not belong to them in the same sense that it belonged to Han officials and scholars. In addition, there were numerous and pervading resonances between the elite culture of Confucianism and the folk cultures of Han communities all over China and beyond. Operas and oral stories told tales that demonstrated the virtues analyzed and systematized in the classics; ancestor worship enacted Confucian notions of proper lineage and family organization; customary law of family and inheritance reflected Confucian notions of proper relationships and behavior. And most important, as there was no sharp dividing line between

4. The term "Han" has a varied history. It was the dynastic name adopted by the Liu family from 206 B.C.E. to 220 C.E. and came to be something of an ethnonym in later times. In the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), however, it referred to the people of north China, including Khitan and Koreans (Endicott-West 1989: 13). The Qing dynasts, themselves Manchus, used the word when writing in the Chinese language to refer to what we now call Han or "ethnic Chinese," and it has come in modern times to refer unambiguously to this group. Hence I will use the word throughout this book for consistency, realizing that certain particular usages are anachronistic. Unlike certain authors, I do not want to use "Chinese" to refer to this group, since, in the Southwest in particular, there are millions of people who unequivocally consider themselves to be Chinese (Zhongguo *ren*, Zhoguoco, etc.) and just as clearly deny that they are Han.

ruling class and peasantry or merchants in Qing China, there was also no sharp line dividing elite from folk cultures. An unassimilated Yi or Yao who passed the examinations and became an imperial official had to be markedly bicultural, operating in the home sphere with one set of assumptions, practices, and vocabulary, and in the official sphere with quite another set. But a Han villager who made it in the official world simply had to shade over from a folk to an elite version of the same language, rituals, and manners. Elite Chinese culture claimed universality; this claim was justified in the sense that anyone could participate. But it was universality on the condition that one act in a literized (*wen*) manner, and the basis of that literization was Han culture.

In late Imperial China, the idea of a superior culture at the center went along with the imperial version of what I have elsewhere called a "civilizing project" (Harrell 1995a) but will refer to here with the neologistic but more accurate term "literizing project," since the basis of status was not urbanism but familiarity with texts. The universal validity of the high culture meant that anyone could adopt it; its moral superiority meant that the ruling class was duty-bound to acculturate others to it. If peoples were originally included in the Chinese empire by a process of ethnicization—political subjugation with minimal cultural change—the ideal of the literizers was still assimilation, making others literate and moral by persuading them to conform with norms dictated by the high culture, whose basis was Han. As Townsend points out (1992: 125), this amounted to "state nationalism"—pursuit of the idea that citizens of a state should have a common culture and thus constitute a nation—on the part of the imperial authorities. That this state nationalism was successful is of course demonstrated by the expansion of Han culture from the North China Plain in the third millennium B.C.E. to the eastern and southern oceans and the southwestern mountain walls by the twentieth century C.E.

What differentiates this imperial form from the present one, however, is very clear. In Imperial times, the high, literate culture was valid for everybody; no other culture was as good, for anyone. People around the peripheries were inferior because they had different and thus inferior cultures. Since the early twentieth century, the new versions of the high culture have been seen as the exclusive property of the Chinese (whether just the Han or all Chinese within the borders is still a matter of contention), and people around the peripheries have been thought to have different cultures because they are inferior. This transformation has come about as China has become a modern state, still struggling with whether it is really a nation-state.

Through a series of historical events beginning with the Opium War (1839–42) and proceeding to the semicolonial imposition of unequal treaties, the failed reforms of 1898, the Republican revolution of 1911, the May Fourth Movement of the late teens and twenties, the Japanese invasion, the Civil War, and the whole set of cataclysmic social changes brought about by the imposition of communism beginning in the late 1940s, Chinese intellectuals and politicians came to the realization that China would have to become a state like other states, and they set about creating such a state in much of the territory that had been ruled by the former empire. We need not rehearse modern Chinese history here, but we should outline briefly a set of processes that effected the change from imperial to national ethnic relations.

First, as intellectuals around the turn of the century increasingly despaired of China's ability to survive as an empire, Republicans began to identify China as a nation—an ethnic group with common descent, territory, and culture, but which was also politically sovereign. It was at this time that radical reformers, beginning with Liang Qichao in 1902, began to think and write of China as a *minzu*, a term probably first used in Meiji-era Japan (and pronounced *minzoku* in Japanese, but written with the same characters in Japan as in China) as part of the process of building a nation out of the fragmented feudal order that was Japan of the Edo period (1615–1868) (Morris-Suzuki 1996). When Liang picked up the term, he first defined it as a group with a common geographic origin, a common bloodline, common physical characteristics, common language, common writing, common religion, common customs, and a common mode of livelihood (Peng Yingming 1985: 9). For Liang and his associates, the unification of China as a nation could still be accomplished under the overlordship of the Manchu Qing dynasty, but radical revolutionaries who picked up the usage—the most prominent among them Sun Zhongshan (Sun Yat-sen)—began to identify the culture of the Chinese nation explicitly with a single ethnic group (the Han) and to exclude others (particularly the ruling Manchus) from this national-cultural community (ibid.: 9–10).[5]

But this explicit Han nationalism was unworkable unless the Chinese patriots who advocated it also wanted to give up half or more of the territory that had been under imperial rule. A strong China, for reasons of pride as well as natural resources and military defense, had to include parts of Central Asia, Mongolia, and Tibet, as well as the ethnically mixed areas of the South and Southwest. So the original idea of the nation-state, so effective in exciting anti-Manchu rebelliousness, evolved quickly into Sun Zhongshan's idea of a "Republic of Five Nationalities"—Han, Zang (Tibetan), Meng (Mongolian),

Hui (Muslim—but in this case referring to the Turkic speaking peoples of what is now Xinjiang), and Man (Manchu)—each represented by a stripe on the new Republican flag (Sun 1928: 12).

It is quite significant that the four minority groups represented in this formulation are all, in our modern sense, nations—large, territorially compact ethnic groups with reasonable, and in these cases historically founded, claims to political sovereignty. Though the Republicans opposed sovereignty for the Turkic or Mongolian peoples then within China's territory, they recognized its possibility. These groups' incorporation into the Republic would thus have to be in a process of ethnicization; previous imitation had precluded assimilation, at least in the short run.

There were no stripes on the flag, however, for any of the peoples centered in the Southwest, including the ones described in this book. In addition to cultural inferiority—something they at least implicitly shared with the Mongols, Manchus, Muslims, and Tibetans—they also had the added disadvantage of having no recent state sovereignty.[6] They were, in a sense, the peoples who remained on the far peripheries after those somewhat closer to the center had become assimilated; in the last centuries of the empire a few of them, such as the Nuosu, had responded by conscious tribalization, whereas others were in the process of being assimilated. Neither tribalization nor partial assimilation was perceived by Chinese nationalists as a barrier to eventual total assimilation, which became the explicit policy of the Republican government. When the Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek referred, then, to the *Zhonghua minzu*, or Chinese nation, he meant, ideally at least, a potentially culturally uniform national population living within China's borders (Chiang 1947: 39).

The Communist Variant

The Chinese Communist Party, upon taking power in 1949, inherited both the remnant cultural nationalism of the Republic and the very different Marxist-

6. One could argue that the Tai (or Dai) of Sipsong Panna (now called in Chinese Xishuang-banna Daizu Autonomous Prefecture) did have a functioning sovereign state into the twentieth century, but the combination of the fact that Chinese imperial regimes from the Yuan on had conferred titles on the ruler, implying his subordination, and the ignorance on the part of the Republicans about this area in general prevented the early Republicans from taking any Tai claim to nationhood very seriously. And of course the Tai state was small and weak, so no Chinese state was very afraid of its claims, though it is still not allowed in Chinese publications to refer to pre-1951 Sipsong Panna as a kingdom. See Hsieh 1995.

Leninist views on "the national question" (Connor 1984). This latter, of course, had to take priority in official policy at least, and it demanded that Han culture no longer be considered superior a priori and that no group be either legally disprivileged or subject to overt pressures of cultural assimilation. In short, Communist doctrine resisted both the empire model, in which ethnic groups were legally unequal, and the nation-state model, in which equality was based on the real or promised erasure of ethnic distinctions. The Communists could neither ignore ethnic distinctions nor make these distinctions invidiously, as either one would be cultural nationalism, or *da Han minzu zhuyi*—"great Han chauvinism." Instead, they had to create what they called a "unified country of diverse nationalities." What this meant was that all the ethnic groups in China, however many there turned out to be—and explicitly including not only the historical nations represented in the five-color flag but also the smaller and politically less organized groups in the Southwest and elsewhere—had to be recognized and accorded equal status as elements of the new state.

At the same time, the Communists were committed to economic and political development. As orthodox Marxist-Leninists, they espoused an idea of development that divided human history in general into five stages, originally systematized in Stalin's Soviet Union: the primitive, slave, feudal, capitalist, and socialist modes of production, in scientifically discovered historical order. It was empirically obvious in the China of the 1950s that members of different ethnic groups stood on different rungs of this ladder of human progress, and in general the Han (along with perhaps a few Hui Muslims, Manchus, and Koreans) stood at the top. The Communists thus formulated a policy of development that urged the "brother nationalities," or *xiongdi minzu*, to follow the example of the advanced Han and move quickly forward in history, even to skip some of the rungs on the ladder. One effect of this policy was to confirm the Han in their place of prominence as the most developed and the people whom the others should follow. The only difference between the Communist development project and the literizing project of the old Empire was thus the rationale: in Imperial times, peoples of the periphery had been urged to follow the Han example because it was morally superior in its own right; in Communist times they were urged to follow the Han example because it stood higher on an objective scale that was originally formulated without respect to who occupied its higher gradations, but conveniently placed the Han at the top.

Communist nationality policy was thus quite simple in its conception. First, the People's Republic's constituent "nationalities" (*minzu*) had to be identified, along with their position on the scale of progress. Second, they had to be given

the opportunity (or coerced, depending on one's point of view) to develop in the direction of universal progress. Given the preexisting situation on the ground, particularly in such areas as the Southwest, identification was no easy task, and the development would be as hard or harder for the minorities as it turned out to be for the Han core. The ways in which these two prongs of Communist policy—ethnic identification and economic and cultural development—interacted with local categories and local society are the subjects of chapter 3.

3 / Ethnology, Linguistics, and Politics

In any political system that involves relations among ethnic groups and/or nations, ideas of nationhood and identity maintain their salience only insofar as they are framed in categories relevant to the lives of the participants. Since ethnic groups and nations exist only insofar as people recognize their existence, their existence must be continually reinforced and restated by acts that communicate the continued salience of the categories. For example, as long as police in American cities differentially stop and question darker-skinned males simply for being in a particular part of town at a particular time of night, as long as census forms ask respondents to check one of several boxes labeled "race," as long as young men on certain street corners speak with a particular vocabulary and intonation pattern, the categories "black" and "white" will retain salience in American society. Similarly, as long as the personal identification cards of Chinese citizens carry a designation labeled *minzu*, as long as circle dances are performed in remote township squares on state occasions, as long as the language known to its own speakers as *Nuosu ddoma* continues to be spoken, and as long as members of certain categories are given preference in high school admissions, citizens of the Liangshan area will continue to be divided into the categories Yi, Han, Zang, and so forth.

Communicative acts such as those described above do not create ethnicity in the causal sense. The thing communicated about must have some importance for the communicative act to have meaning in the first place. But the communicative acts are necessary to sustain (and sometimes create) the facts of culture, kinship, and history that give their meanings such salience. Thus one way in which we can speak of ethnic identity is as a series of languages of communication about group membership and group relationships. In most systems of ethnic relationships, there are two general ways in which languages communicate about ethnicity, and each of these in turn is used in two or three specific types of languages.

The first way in which languages communicate about ethnicity is through the use of one set of symbols rather than another equivalent set, thereby com-

municating the ethnic aspect of the communicative relationship in which the symbols are used. Two kinds of languages can communicate about ethnicity in this way. The first of these is simply what we conventionally call languages, such as English, Black English, standard Chinese, and *Nuosu ddoma*. In many situations, merely using a particular idiom conveys a lot of information about the speaker and the listeners: whether I speak English or Chinese or *Nuosu ddoma*, when, and with whom, communicates things about ethnicity that are not necessarily explicit in the content of the conversation.

Signs other than speech and writing also communicate information about ethnic relations simply by being used. The whole series of cultural behaviors usually known as ethnic markers—which can include food, dress, housing styles, ritual, and many other things—are at this level nothing but signs, often conveying simple information about the ethnicity of the person employing them. People in the United States who wear yarmulkes or celebrate Passover are making a statement to each other and to outsiders about their Jewish ethnicity, for example, in the same way that people in Liangshan who preserve boneless pigs and worship the household deity Zambala are making a statement that they are either Naze or Prmi, but certainly not Nuosu or Han.

The second way that languages express ethnicity is by *talking about* it, by employing the categories that *refer to* ethnic groups and relations. In the Chinese case, and in Liangshan in particular, there are at least three different types of idioms that are used to talk *about* ethnicity. The first of these is the ordinary speech of people as they go about their business and have occasion to speak about themselves and their neighbors in terms of ethnic categories, which exist in all the languages spoken in the area, though the categories used in one language do not map exactly onto the categories used in another. This language often includes self-referential aspects, as people use their ethnic languages (in the above mode where the use of one language rather than another indicates something about ethnicity) to speak about ethnic relations, and even about the use of language, which in a polyglot area is an important aspect of their daily lives.

The second kind of language used to *talk about* ethnicity is the scholarly one of ethnohistory—the geographic and temporal story of the location and movement of peoples, presuming for the sake of argument that there are such things as peoples, civilizations, cultures. This language has been developed primarily by scholars, but the line between scholarship and local discourse is never clearly drawn. Thus the stories and legends of a local community are data for the scholars' systematic accounts, even as the systematic accounts, read and discussed in local communities, become incorporated into the local or folk narratives and classifications (Hanson 1989, Haley and Wilcoxon 1997).

The third language is that of the state discourse of ethnic identification, through which authorities in multiethnic states identify every citizen as belonging to one or another ethnic group or category. In the United States, this takes the forms of census categories and affirmative action goals, among others, and in China takes the form of the process of "ethnic identification," through which the Communist-led government, beginning in the 1950s, attempted to classify all of its citizens into one or another *minzu* (Lin 1987, Fei 1980). All official communications use this language of ethnic identification.

The manifestations of ethnicity described in this book can thus be seen as a series of communicative acts, performed in the kinds of languages described above. The remainder of this chapter describes how the formal languages of ethnic discourse have been formulated in the period of Communist rule, how the process of ethnic identification established the vocabulary of the official discourse and influenced that of the popular discourse, and how the work of ethnology and linguistics provided the language of ethnohistory to support and reinforce the categories formulated in the process of ethnic identification.

ETHNOLOGY, LINGUISTICS, AND THE LANGUAGES OF ETHNICITY

The Chinese Communists came to power in 1949–50 armed with two ideologies. The first of these was nationalism, through which they were determined to forge a "unified, multinational state" within their borders, including the minority regions around the peripheries. The second was Marxism-Leninism, through which they were determined to lead the inhabitants of that state in China proper forward from their "semifeudal, semicolonial" historical stage, and the inhabitants of the minority regions forward from whatever earlier stages of history they might then be at, into the future of socialism and eventual communism. To accomplish the twin goals dictated by these twin ideologies, the Communists needed the help of social scientists, particularly ethnologists and linguists, and these social scientists thus became closely implicated in the projects of state-building and national development, particularly as they applied in the peripheral areas. It was the ethnological projects that, in a sense, wrote the lexicons and grammars of the ethnohistorical and ethnic identification languages used in China today not only to talk about ethnicity but to attempt to regulate ethnic relations.

Precursors to Ethnology in Late Imperial Times. Description and classification of peripheral peoples have a long history in China. The earliest systematic general history, *Records of the Historian* (Shi ji), written by Sima Qian in the early first century B.C.E., contains chapters dealing with various peoples around the peripheries of the Chinese world, including "Record of the Southwestern Barbarians" (Xinan yi liezhuan). In only slightly later times, works such as *Records of Foreign Countries* (Huayang guo zhi) from the Jin period and *Book of Barbarians* (Man shu) from the Tang dynasty are entirely devoted to ethnology in the sense of describing the customs, habits, and ecology of foreign peoples.

By the Ming and Qing dynasties there had evolved two different, but connected, traditions of ethnological reporting about the Southwest. One was the writing of accounts of non-Han peoples in standard documents such as local gazetteers (*fang zhi* or *difang zhi*) and in the personal accounts of scholars and literati who administered or visited non-Han areas. The other was the pictorial ethnology of the *Miao man tu ce*, often called "Miao album" in English, a genre that is a sort of catalogue of minority "peoples" (including other groups in addition to those called Miao), each afforded a two-page spread consisting of a stylized picture and a brief description of physical characteristics, temperament, livelihood, and customs.[1]

Despite the very different levels of discourse embodied in these two genres, they share a common set of assumptions that still inform Chinese ethnology to a degree. First, they are driven by a classificatory impulse. Groups are named and categorized, and the categorization is anchored both in an assumption of a common history and in a set of characteristics of livelihood, temperament, customs, and so forth. Second, they are concerned with the distance of each group from the cultural ideal of the Han core. In many sources, groups are divided into two basic types. *Shu*, "cooked" or "ripe," peoples are those who, in spite of their obvious non-Chinese origin and their inferior customs and different languages, are still participants in the Chinese political order,

ruled either directly by the imperial field administration or indirectly by appointed local rulers, and often practice Chinese customs such as ancestor worship, are bilingual in their native languages and Chinese, and sometimes even participate in the classical educational system and the civil-service examinations.[2] *Sheng*, or "raw," peoples, by contrast, are those still beyond the influence of literization entirely, out of reach of any but the most sporadic and military government, ignorant of Han language and culture. Classification and scaling, the two basic principles of the 1950s ethnological project, are thus present already in literature from the late centuries of the Imperial era.

The Development of a Chinese-Western Hybrid Ethnology. After the fall of the empire in 1911, and especially after the beginning of the so-called May Fourth Era of iconoclasm and absorption of Western ideas beginning in about 1919, a flood of Western -ologies flowed into China, and among them were ethnology and anthropology. In the 1920s and early 1930s, such diverse systems of thought as evolutionism, German Kulturkreislehre, and British structural-functionalism caught the attention of Chinese scholars, first eager to look for scientific reasons why China had developed differently from the West, but soon thereafter thinking about the problems of the relations between China proper and the peripheral regions now included in the Republic's administrative borders (Chen Yongling 1998). Ethnology and anthropology were taught in universities in various parts of the country, including Peking University and Yenching University in Beiping, Zhongshan University in Guangzhou, and Xiamen University in the city of that name (Guldin 1994: 23–56).

Already in the period before World War II, foreign-educated Chinese ethnologists and their homegrown students had conducted considerable research among minority populations, but this research, paradoxically, grew in quantity and sophistication during the war years. Many intellectuals from the eastern and southern coastal cities moved inland to Sichuan, Yunnan, and Guangxi to escape the Japanese invaders, and a large number of them, along with scholars native to these areas, conducted field research among the minority peoples of the Southwest. Many of China's most eminent ethnologists, anthropologists, and anthropological linguists—such as Wu Wenzao, Fei Xiaotong, Liang Zhaotao, Lin Yaohua, Ma Xueliang, Yang Chengzhi, Feng Hanyi, Fu Maoji—and a host of others contributed to this effort as well as to the ethnological and ethnolinguistic projects carried out later under the Communists.

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1. See Diamond (1995) and Hostetler (2001) for descriptions and analyses of Miao albums. The modern successor to this genre is perhaps the packets of postcards or trading cards of the fifty-six minzu of China printed in the 1980s; each has a picture on one side and a set of facts (population and area of habitation—analogous to batting average and RBIs?) on the other. I have two different sets of these cards, but the only Miao album I have seen, a rare manuscript, is kept under lock and key at the University of Washington's East Asia Library. It does not depict primarily Miao but rather peoples of Yunnan, mostly Tibeto-Burman, calling into question the name "Miao albums."

2. The participation of ethnically non-Han peoples in the civil-service examinations was a feature of local ethnic relations during the Qing period in many places in the Southwest, including the Nuosu village of Manshuiwan, described in detail in chapter 8.

The ethnology of these times is, as one might expect, a hybrid. While many of the scholars who wrote on the Southwest (such as Lin Yaohua, in his account of the Nuosu in Liangshan [1961]) were foreign-trained and incorporated the tenets of, for example, structural-functional analysis into their accounts, most of them still retained the classifying and ordering tendencies of their Imperial forebears. If the descriptions were more lifelike and less stereotypical, based on careful and often extended observation, the context was often still that of the descendants of certain peoples mentioned in the ancient texts, now known through science in greater detail but still retaining the character of their early ancestors.[3]

The kind of classification these scholars engaged in is indicated by the term for "ethnology" in standard Chinese: *minzuxue*, or "the study of *minzu*," a term that had acquired a second sense in addition to the nationalistic one described in chapter 2. That nationalistic sense has been perpetuated—in the term *Zhonghua minzu*, or "Chinese nation"—not only by cultural nationalists such as Chiang Kai-shek but also by the Communists, who used *minzu* to translate the Soviet Russian term *natsiya* (Connor 1984). *Zhonghua minzu* continues to be used in nationalistic appeals by China's Communist Party and government almost interchangeably with such terms as *long de chuan ren* (descendants of the dragon) and *Yan Huang zisun* (children and grandchildren of the emperors Yan [or Shen Nong] and Huang [or the Yellow Emperor]). In the ideology of China as a "unified country of diverse nationalities," all nationalities, or *minzu* in its second sense, are united in the greater Chinese nation, or *Zhonghua minzu*.

Ethnology, or *minzuxue*, however, is most concerned with the second sense of the term *minzu*, which refers to the groups that make up the nation. As mentioned in chapter 2, the term was originally used in this sense by such nationalist writers as Sun Zhongshan to refer to the major historical groups that made up the Chinese empire and were to be included as citizens of the new Chinese Republic and represented by the five stripes of the original Chinese Republican flag. The ethnologists working in the Southwest, however, quickly expanded the use of this term, using it in scholarly and administrative journals of the 1920s through 1940s to refer to the groups classified and described in their works. *Minzuxue* thus became the study of cultural and social difference, of the defining characteristics of the many and diverse peoples who inhabited China's border regions.

Emerging from this rather bourgeois, foreign-influenced background, Chinese ethnologists and linguists were asked, between 1949 and 1958, and again after 1978, to contribute to the Party-led projects of national unity and socialist development (Chen Yongling 1998: 25–33). From 1958 to 1966, the period of the Great Leap Forward and the subsequent famine and rebuilding, their role was restricted, as was the role of all intellectuals, many of whom were labeled as "rightists" after 1957. From 1966 to 1978, the period of the truly radical policies of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, their role was practically nonexistent, except for a small amount of linguistic work (Guldin 1994: chap. 10). But after 1978 the project of ethnology literally continued where it had left off in the 1950s, to the extent that many articles researched and written in the 1950s, but judiciously tucked into drawers during the radical interlude, were taken out again and published in the 1980s. And despite the de facto turning away from socialism, and thus from much of Marxism-Leninism, as a formula for development after 1979, the project of nationalities unity was still a crucial one to the Communists, and development, though frequently changing its ideal form, had never lost its importance.

The contribution asked of the ethnologists and linguists was thus much the same in the 1980s and 1990s as it had been in the 1950s. In both periods, it began with new versions of the old projects of classification and scaling, structured since the revolution by the Soviet-derived notions of nationality and of the stages of history. From there it proceeded to various derivative tasks, such as recording the histories of the now-fixed entities, standardizing their languages and cultures, and, in the 1980s, reconstructing an economically developing, multiethnic polity out of the ruins of Cultural Revolution radicalism.

Identification: Determining Which Minzu Exist in China. With the advent of Communist Party rule in China, the term *minzu* in the second, more local sense became equated with the Soviet Russian term *natsionalnost'* (Connor 1984), which was defined by that eminent ethnologist Josef Vissarionovich Stalin as a group with four common characteristics: language, territory, economy, and psychological nature manifested in a common culture (Gladney 1991: 66–67). (Around the same time, *minzu*, so defined, acquired the standard English translation "nationality," which it retains, to the horror of Western ethnologists, in official and tourist literature on China today.)[4] These four cri-

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3. I have treated the nature of historiography and ethnology of the Yi peoples in the Republican and Communist periods in "The History of the History of the Yi" (1995b).

4. I have noticed, however, that at least one of the regional *minzu xueyuan*, most of which translate their own name as "nationalities institute," has recently changed its name to the "Central

teria of *minzu* membership were the ostensible basis of the 1950s project of ethnic identification.

The identification project began when local groups were invited to submit applications for the status of *minzu*. According to later accounts (Fei 1981), over four hundred groups submitted such applications, which were then judged by teams of researchers, supposedly to determine whether they conformed to Stalin's four criteria. After researchers compiled data on the four hundred applications, the actual number of groups was determined to be somewhere in the fifties, stabilizing at fifty-four minorities[5] plus the majority Han in 1962, and having been augmented since then only by the addition of the Jinuo in 1979 (Du 1985).[6]

Recent retrospective scholarship, however, has shown that there was great variation in the extent to which the identification process actually used Stalin's criteria in determining group boundaries. In some cases they worked reasonably well. In such areas as Inner Mongolia, Tibet, and East Turkistan or Xinjiang, the conventional Chinese usage of the term *minzu* for Mongols, Tibetans, or Uygurs probably fits fairly well with an English speaker's intuitive feel for the idea of nationality, since these peoples lived in compact territories, were reasonably uniform culturally, and all had historical experience of independent statehood. Their inclusion in China (which many people in those areas continue to oppose) rather unambiguously makes the People's Republic of China a multinational state, as advertised.

In most of the Southwest, however, things are somewhat different, since different *minzu*, or different cultural and linguistic collectivities, live intermixed in that area, and there have been few historical instances of ethnically based states there, and none in recent centuries. In this kind of a situation, it becomes much more difficult to apply Stalin's criteria to nationality, and in fact Chinese ethnologists sometimes gave lip-service to his criteria while actually classifying *minzu* according to other standards. Lin Yaohua (1987) has shown, for example, that researchers in the Southwest discovered early on that the kind of

intermixture of ethnic groups found in that area did not conform to the model implied by Stalin's definition, and that researchers who still had to come up with policy recommendations thus fell back primarily on language as a criterion for identification.[7] Jiang Yongxing (1985), writing about Guizhou, has commented that the identification teams relied too heavily on "historical relatedness" of groups and not enough on local people's own wishes, with the result that many identities in Guizhou are still disputed and many groups are still "yet to be identified" (Cheung 1995a, 1996).

Despite the scientific premises and seeming finality of this project, there is still much dispute in certain areas over whether *minzu* were identified properly in the original project or the follow-up work that goes on in some places to this day. The uncertainties and disputes almost inevitably come from communities whose members feel their own *minzu* identity was wrongly determined in the classifying project. These are of two kinds. The most common are groups who feel they have been unjustly lumped with larger groups but ought to have a separate identity of their own. The Baima Zang of northwestern Sichuan are such a group; they have even printed and distributed a collection of historical essays that demonstrate their separateness from the Tibetans whose *minzu* they were included in, but it is reported that the opposition of the tenth Panchen Lama (who died in 1989) prevented the Zang from being broken up in this way.[8] Other examples are the Ge of southeastern Guizhou (Cheung 1995a, 1996) and, at one time at least, many of the Shuitian people described in chapter 13 of this book (see also Harrell 1990). The other type consists of people who claim minority status despite official classification as Han. Certain Hui of southern Fujian, described by Dru Gladney (1991: chap. 6) and Fan Ke (n.d.) are an example of this second type, in this case one that successfully won reclassification in the 1980s.

China University for Ethnic Groups." This does not really solve the problem of translation of *minzu* into English.

5. In this book, I reserve the term "minorities" for those ethnic groups that are officially designated or wish for official designation in the classification system of a modern state. In the People's Republic of China, "minorities" is a customary and reasonable translation of the official term *shaoshu minzu*.

6. For an officially sanctioned account of the process, see Fei 1981; for critiques by foreign scholars, see Heberer 1989 and Gladney 1991.

7. Lin explains the inability to classify southwestern groups according to Stalin's criteria by the fact that the criteria were designed for areas where the transition to capitalism was already initiated, while the peoples of southwest China were still at the feudal, slave, or occasionally even the late primitive stages. In fact, there was a debate in the 1950s as to whether to apply the term *minzu* to groups in the earlier stages of history according to the Morganian-Marxist paradigm, or whether to use distinctive terms such as *buluo* (tribe) or *buzu* (tribal ethnic group). For reasons of political equality, the debate was decided in favor of using *minzu* for all of the groups (Li Shaoming, lecture at the University of Washington, March 1999).

8. The Panchen's opposition is a widely circulated rumor that I have never seen in print. However, Zang scholars have begun to attack both the "separatist" ideas of certain Baima scholars and the whole idea of the Pumi as a *minzu*. See Sichuan Sheng Minzu Yanjiu Suo 1980 and Upton 1998.

The existence of continuing controversies over identification points out two important things about the identification project and about ethnic relations generally. First, the project is not a one-way thing, imposed top-down on passive local peoples. From the beginning, consultation with local leaders was an important part of the process, and from the beginning also, many if not most of the agents of the state who implemented ethnic identification and other aspects of the literizing project were themselves members of the minority communities. In other words, the language of ethnic identification is one that can be spoken by people of all ethnic identities and claimed identities. And the participation of people with local, changing interests ensures that even this attempt to determine classifications once and for all will always run up against shifting identities and interests of those being classified. In other words, the vocabulary of this language is not entirely closed or predetermined, though the ethnic identification project tried to make it as closed as possible. Second, classification is a vital issue in the minority regions of China. Not only people's pride and their understanding of their heritage and their place in the world, but also their access to resources are heavily dependent on it.

Description: Coming to Know the Minzu. Mere identification of minzu, however, is not enough of a contribution from linguists and ethnologists to enable the state to accomplish its goals in minority regions. Because the state project involves not only ruling the peoples within its territory but also economic and cultural development (defined as progress toward socialism and eventually communism, starting from wherever on the ladder of history a particular group might have been at the time of the Communist takeover), peoples must also be described in considerable detail, both in order to determine where they are on the ladder of development and also to provide specific knowledge about them that will be useful in various aspects of rule and promotion of economic and cultural development. To this end, the project of ethnic identification in the 1950s was combined with a massive project of ethnology, and many of the same scholars who contributed to the founding and early development of Chinese ethnology before 1949, along with younger scholars coming of age since the Communist takeover, were enlisted in this effort of data collection about the minorities' society, history, and language. Through this massive effort, continuing to this day, the scientific language of ethnology and ethnohistory was created and developed as a supplement to the political language of ethnic identification.

In the first heyday of this project, many investigations were conducted and reports written, and in preparation for the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the People's Republic in 1959, a large-scale effort began in 1957 to publish an encyclopedic series of reports on society and history. These first-generation reports, known colloquially as "white-covered books," or *baipi shu,* were compiled in great haste at the time of the Great Leap Forward, only to fall quickly under criticism for their insufficiently Marxist content, demonstrated by the fact that many of the senior scholars involved in their compilation were pre-revolutionary bourgeois ethnologists, some of them officially coming to be labeled rightists in the Anti-Rightist campaign beginning in summer 1957 (Chen Yongling 1998: 33–36). Many reports never saw the light of day, and went underground until the revival of ethnology and ethnology research institutes in the 1980s. During that decade they were then published, together with many results from research newly conducted in the 1980s, in the provincial collections of "reports of social and historical investigations" (*shehui lishi diaocha baogao*). These reports (over fifty volumes for Yunnan, for example, and ten or more each for Sichuan and Guizhou) consist both of individual reports on various topics and of ordered presentations of what is important to know about a particular *minzu* at a particular stage of development. For example, *Summary Volume of Historical and Social Investigations on the Yi of Liangshan in Sichuan Province* (Sichuan sheng Liangshan Yizu shehui lishi diaocha zonghe baogao) treats the following topics concerning the Nuosu of Liangshan, generally placed at the slave society level of development (Sichuan 1985: 5):

Part 1: Social Productive Forces
   1. The principal sector of production—agriculture
   2. Production activities that serve as subsidiary occupations: herding, fishing, forestry, and others
   3. Handicrafts not yet separated from agriculture
   4. Exchange of commodities that had not developed into a separate economic sector
   5. Production and sale of opium and its effect on the productive forces in Yi Society

Part 2: Castes and Caste Relations
   1. Caste structure
   2. The means of production controlled by each caste, and its economic situation
   3. Caste relations
   4. Caste mobility
   5. Class (caste) struggle and its form
   6. Summary

1. Land tenure relations
2. Land sales and pawning
3. The situation of land management
4. Other situations of rent and tenancy

Part 4: Clan system
1. Clans
2. Enemies
3. Household and marriage

The reports of social and historical investigations, along with various journals that have sprung up in *minzu* studies in provincial and prefectural institutes, as well as in departments of ethnology and anthropology at various universities and nationalities institutes constitute a rich corpus of ethnographic data spanning five decades (though concentrated very heavily in the 1950s and again in the 1980s and 1990s), but they do not simply present data in an empirical fashion. In accordance with the responsibilities of ethnologists and linguists to the state's minority projects, these works are concerned not only with identification, classification, and description but also with ordering. Each *minzu*, envisioned as a group with certain characteristics in common (Stalin's four criteria), must be regularized, systematized, normalized in Michel Foucault's sense (1977: 177–84), made to conform to a paradigm of what a *minzu* is. This standardization or normalization has taken many forms, including the ethnographic collections described above, but others have been particularly the province of scholars: the writing of histories and the preparation of linguistic materials.

Writing Standard Histories. Along with the reports of social and historical investigations, the State Nationalities Commission also published, in the mid- and late 1980s, a series of concise histories of *minzu* (*minzu jianshi*), one for each of the fifty-five officially recognized minority ethnic groups, or *shaoshu minzu*. Along with other historical works published by institutes and university presses, these standard histories set forth orthodox interpretations of the unitary history of each of the fifty-five minorities. Although these histories vary somewhat in content, they mostly conform to a standard format, one that places the history of each *minzu* into the framework of the history of China as a whole, and into the universal framework of the Marxist-Stalinist stages of evolution in human history. As Ralph Litzinger describes the volume on the Yao,

through history; it charts the obstacles they have encountered in their long and arduous path to realize full social and economic potential, to become a socialist, modern *minzu*.

[*Yaozu jianshi* (The concise history of the Yao)] takes the reader on a tour through the long historical stretch of Chinese history, as moments in the history of the Yao are situated in different dynastic regimes and related to social evolutionary stages. (Litzinger 1995: 130)

Works on other *minzu* are similar in their conception and construction (Harrell 1995b). There are three features to notice in these histories. First, there is no questioning of the idea that these *minzu* are real units, despite the fact that they were definitively identified for the first time in the 1950s and that some of their boundaries are still actively disputed. Second, the history of each *minzu* is calibrated to what I have elsewhere described as "history with a capital H, which stands for Han" (Harrell 1995b: 75). There is no doubt left that these *minzu* are part of the Chinese nation and have been for a very long time. Yet placing them in the context of the stages of human evolution makes it clear that they are a backward or inferior part of that Chinese nation. Third, much of the writing of these histories is done by scholars who are themselves members of the minority *minzu* in question. As representatives of their own *minzu* and at the same time participants in this hegemonic state project, they participate in the two-way process of co-optation mentioned above: their story gets told, and it is a glorious one, but it is told as a part of the larger story of the Chinese nation as a whole.

Standardizing Languages. One of the clearest indications of the Chinese state's ambivalence about its status as a present-day empire or a nation-state is its attitude toward minority languages. Although the Han language is clearly hegemonic, as the only one used in nationwide media and taught in all schools, the government, especially in the 1950s and again in the 1980s, has actively promoted the use of minority languages alongside Han Chinese. It has supported the development of print media in many of the minority languages (particularly those with large numbers of speakers), thus using one of the most prominent policies of nation-state building described by Benedict Anderson (1991), in the service of building a state that is not exactly sure of the sense in which it wants to be a nation.

In order to promote the use of non-Han languages, of course, linguistic scholars had to be enlisted in a linguistic project, much as ethnologists were enlisted in the project of ethnic classification, description, and history writ-

ing. If the languages of the minority *minzu* were to come up to the Han standard, they needed to be described, classified, standardized, written, and taught systematically in the schools. It has been the work of linguists, beginning with those attached to the ethnic identification teams in the 1950s, to accomplish these tasks with the minority languages.

Description, of course, involved a heavy investment in field linguistics, recording a large number of varieties. But merely recording and listing varieties was insufficient; these languages were those of the fifty-five minority *minzu*, after all, and each *minzu* needed to have its own language classified and related to those of other *minzu*. A standard *Stammbaum* classification was worked out by the 1980s (Guojia Minwei 1981: 585–86) that conveniently correlated, on a nearly one-to-one basis, *minzu* and their languages.[9] In addition, the varieties spoken by each *minzu* were further broken down into dialects (*fangyan*), and sometimes subdialects (*ci fangyan*) and local vernaculars (*tuyu*) (Bradley 1990, 2001). Only when the varieties spoken by members of a *minzu* cut across language families could a *minzu* have two languages; otherwise any variation was termed dialectal.

The linguistic project was not just descriptive and classificatory, however; it had and retains the practical purpose of using the languages in the modern context of nation-building and economic development. This means that standard varieties had to be chosen (for Yi, to take an example, this was a complex task, handled differently in the three provinces of Sichuan, Yunnan, and Guizhou [Bradley 2001]), and textbooks written for use in schools (Harrell and Bamo 1998). Those languages that had no written form prior to the Communist takeover had to have scripts invented for them (usually based on the Latin alphabet); those that were written previously often needed standardization if they were to be used in textbooks, newspapers, magazines, and other print media.[10]

The paradox of this linguistic project, of course, is that the minority languages are officially available only to promote the messages of national unity and development. Diversity is displayed by the use of the numerous vernaculars in a variety of media. But diversity can go only so far; the linguistic project grants voice to the members of minorities only insofar as they sign on to

9. The only exceptions to this one-to-one correlation were the Yughur, some of whom spoke a Mongolic and some a Turkic language; the Yao, some of whom spoke a Yao, some a Miao, and some a Zhuang-Dong (known in the West as Tai) language; and the Hui and Man, most of whom spoke Han (Guojia Minwei 1981: 586).

10. For fuller descriptions of the process of language recording, classification, and standardization in minority areas, see Harrell 1993 and Dwyer 1998.

the national project. Nevertheless, it is difficult to grant permission for people to speak, and give them the media to do so, while still keeping them from expressing any messages of conflict or separatism. Especially in the 1990s, divergent voices speaking for local ethnic groups have become more and more common, as related in the case studies in chapters 5 through 13 of this book.

INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN MINORITIES WORK

Chinese ethnology is, then, in a sense a creature of and an important agent of the minority policies of the Chinese Communist Party. In order to carry out its programs of development and national integration, the Party needed the help of ethnologists, linguists, historians, and other scholars. They were the great normalizers, building the base of knowledge and vocabulary that allowed the substantive projects of national integration and development to proceed in the minority regions. But the work of the ethnologists was only a small part, though a vital one, of the overall program of development carried out by means of "minorities work," or *minzu gongzuo*.

When Mao Zedong launched the great systematic ethnological projects in the 1950s, he called upon the scholars and students participating in those projects to "rescue the backward," or *qiangjiu luohou* (Chen Yongling 1998: 31), for knowing who the minorities were, and placing them on the scale of history, were only preliminaries to the real objectives of minorities work. Though its content has shifted along with the Party line over the half-century of Communist rule, minorities work has still maintained its two primary objectives: including the minorities in the project of national integration, and developing the minority regions as part of the development of the country as a whole. The whole industry of creating knowledge of minorities, described above, from ethnological reports to standard histories to language textbooks and translation bureaus, was created *in the service of* these greater projects of including the minorities and the minority regions in the projects of national integration and development. The policy and practice of minorities work has been treated in great detail in works by June Teufel Dreyer (1976), Colin Mackerras (1994), and Thomas Heberer (1989, 2001) and, in its cultural aspect, by Louisa Schein (1999). The following summary places the present research in context.

Administration of Minority Regions

The earliest "nationalities policies" of the Chinese Communist Party emphasized the Party's willingness to grant a great deal of autonomy to local gov-

ernments in minority regions that took its side in the civil war against the Guomindang (Kuomintang, KMT) forces (Gladney 1991: 87–91, Atwood 1995). As soon as the Party actually assumed power, however, its attentions were turned toward integration of all within its territory, and the nature of "autonomy" that actually emerged firmly subordinated governments of minority regions to the central government in Beijing. With the partial exception of Tibet before 1959 (Goldstein 1997), there was no opportunity whatsoever for local authorities to pursue policies at odds with those of the central government as formulated by the Party (Heberer 1989: 41). The designated autonomous areas—most of which were established in the 1950s but which had grown to comprise five provincial-level autonomous regions (*zizhi qu*) thirty-one autonomous prefectures (*zizhi zhou*), and 105 autonomous counties (*zizhi xian*) by 1989 (Heberer 1989: 40)—have in essence been under direct rule from Beijing, since their establishment. The *degree* of relative autonomy that they have been able to exercise has varied greatly, however. During the 1950s and again in the 1980s and 1990s, many of the cadres in the Party and government have been members of minorities;[11] there has been wide latitude to use minority languages as primary or supplementary media of instruction in elementary and secondary schools, and since the Autonomy Law of 1984, there has been more local control of budgets than is the case in nonautonomous administrative districts. In the radical periods from 1957 to 1979, on the other hand, and especially during the Cultural Revolution, autonomy was nothing but a word in a title, and not only direct administration by mostly Han cadres, but deliberate attempts to suppress minority culture, religion, and customs were widespread (Gladney 1991: 91–92; Heberer 1989: 25–28; Guo 1996). The efflorescence of varied man-

11. I have, for example, been able to look at the records of all cadres appointed in Xide County in Liangshan (the site of Mishi, described in chap. 6), whose population is about 85 percent Nuosu and 15 percent Han. In this county, from 1976 until 1987 the position of county Party secretary was occupied by a Nuosu (Yi) for nine years and by a Han for three years. Of the seventeen vice-secretaries to serve during this time, eight were Nuosu, eight Han, and one Zang. Of Party department heads to serve during this time, only ten were Nuosu and twenty were Han; of party secretaries in the government, legislature, army, and other offices, thirteen were Nuosu and six Han. Although this is a higher percentage of Han among party secretaries than would be found in the county population, it does not appear to substantiate the charge that there are no minorities in responsible positions in the Party. It is interesting, however, that even within the Party, more cadres in technical positions (heads of departments) tend to be Han than do cadres in general leadership positions or those who serve Party secretaries in administrative, legislative, and army units (CCP Xide 1991). Also, it is reported unofficially that since 1991 there has been a de facto policy of not appointing minorities to Party secretary positions at the prefectural level and above.

ifestations of ethnic identity described in the case studies in this book is partially explicable as a reaction to bad memories of oppression and persecution during the Cultural Revolution years.

The Democratic Reforms and the Displacement of Traditional Political and Economic Structures

Creation and staffing of administrative structures, however, are only a small part of development policy for minority regions. In the beginning, once it was determined where minority populations in various regions stood on the scale of human development, the authorities had to face the problem of social transformation. Nearly all the rural communities in China proper were rent sometime during the years between 1947 and 1952 by the Land Reform campaign, whose purpose was to depose former landholding elites and replace them with Communist Party cadres, and to transform the structure of landholding itself from its former "feudal landlord" basis first to individual peasant ownership and then within a few years to the collectives that were the basis of Chinese agriculture until the early 1980s.[12]

Land reform was also carried out in many minority regions, but only those where it was determined that the social system had already evolved to the stage of the "landlord economy," which is conceptualized as a later stage of feudalism (see Diamant 1999). In those areas where the society had developed only to the beginning stages of feudalism represented by the manorial economy—such as Tibet, the Sipsong Panna Tai kingdom, and much of the western part of Liangshan, or where social evolution was retarded at even earlier stages, such as "slave society" (most of the Nuosu areas of Liangshan) or even the late stages of "primitive society" (certain groups in southern Yunnan)—land reform was not carried out. Indeed, in many of these areas, native authorities, some of them long recognized by imperial governments as *tusi* or other native rulers, were allowed to remain in place alongside the new Party-led administration as long as the local land tenure systems were also in place. The separation of areas that underwent land reform, and those that did not, was often very local, with areas in the same township either reformed or temporarily left alone according to prevailing land systems in individual villages.

This delay in social reform lasted until 1956 in most areas of the Southwest;

12. For accounts of the land reform process in Han rural communities, see Hinton 1966; Potter and Potter 1989; Siu 1989; Friedman, Selden, and Pickowicz 1991.

when reform came, it was initially of a different sort from the violent class struggles of the Land Reform campaign. Instead, the previously untouched minority areas underwent a process called Democratic Reform (Minzhu Gaige, or Mingai for short). In this process, rather than inducing local peasants to struggle against and overthrow their indigenous leaders, Party nationalities workers made an attempt to co-opt as many local leaders as possible into the new administration (in some areas, many of them had been co-opted already). Those who cooperated with the Communists were made into vice-heads of three of the four arms of the state—the People's Government (Renmin Zhengfu), the People's Congress (Renmin Daibiao Dahui, or Renda for short), or the People's Consultative Conference (Renmin Zhengzhi Xietiao Weiyuanhui, or Zhengxie for short)—excepting in most cases the leading arm, the Communist Party. Though they were able to wield very little power in these vice- (*fu*) positions, they retained a measure of prestige as long as they cooperated.

Along with the co-optation of native leaders into local administration came a dismantling of traditional systems of land tenure, including manorial tenancy, serfdom, and slavery, and their replacement by individual freehold tenure, which was itself soon replaced by collectivization, sometimes within only a year or two of the original Democratic Reform. At the beginning of the reform process, it seems to have been a success in many areas, as it was carried out according to the so-called "five don't" principles: don't struggle, kill, settle old scores, raise old land claims, or jail people.[13] But the process did contain within itself the possibility of a much more polarized struggle, since people were classified, as in Han and other landlord economy areas, according to their relationship with the land in the old economy.

This possibility of conflict came to fruition in many parts of the country in the years 1957–59, as the Party's general line radicalized with the Anti-Rightist campaign, the establishment of People's Communes, and the Great Leap Forward. Many former local elites and landowners were dismissed from their largely honorary vice-posts at this time and often were branded as class enemies and struggled against. In many areas, such as the ethnically Tibetan districts of northwestern Sichuan, as well as the areas of Liangshan discussed in this book, some of these leaders, often taking a considerable number of loyal followers with them from among their former tenants or retainers, staged armed revolts and guerilla warfare against the Communist Party administration; these revolts in northwestern Sichuan probably contributed to the geopolitically more

significant 1959 uprising in Tibet, in Liangshan, the acute, large-scale phase of the insurrection lasted for one to two years in most areas, though there were holdouts in remote areas well into the 1960s. The final suppression of the insurrections was followed closely by the twenty tumultuous years of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution; with the general loosening of nationalities policy in the 1980s, not only were many members of the old elites restored to their positions as vice-heads in the People's Congress and People's Consultative Conference, but there has been a cautious effort among many of these people, along with certain minority intellectuals employed in universities and research institutes, to rewrite the history of this period of ethnic conflict, though in doing so they continue to test the limits of tolerance of the propaganda departments that control publication; in general during the 1980s at least, *minzu* questions were considered much more sensitive than even such questions as the worth of socialism or the adaptability of the Marxist-Leninist model of development, and people had to tread very cautiously.

Economic Development

The tortuous course of economic development in China's minority regions proceeded in one sense parallel to that in the rest of China. When the Great Leap Forward mobilized huge numbers of people to build dams, roads, and other public works and to "manufacture" steel on former village threshing grounds, it mobilized in the minority districts also. When the Cultural Revolution took grain as the key link and expanded the area of its cultivation to what had been pasture or uncultivated areas, terraces appeared in newly cut forests on inhospitable mountains. And when agriculture decollectivized and there was a push for the development of what was first called a commodity economy and then a market economy in the 1980s and 1990s, minorities also decollectivized and were encouraged to produce for the market.[14]

The economic development of the minority regions has, however, been different from that in the Han areas, and in three important ways. First, in a situation reminiscent of colonialism or neocolonialism as described by world-systems theorists (Wallerstein 1984), China's peripheral regions have often been seen by central economic planners as sources of raw materials and markets for finished industrial goods. When I visited Xinjiang in 1994, for example, I watched trains of tankers full of oil proceed east toward China proper, while endless

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13. Different people remember different lists. Peng Wenbin (personal communication) was told that the "five don'ts" were don't curse, beat, imprison, kill, or struggle.

14. For a dramatic example of the economics of decollectivization in a very remote pastoral region of Tibet, see Goldstein and Beall 1990.

This was pointed out to me as a common symbol used by Uygur and other minority peoples in Xinjiang to portray their dependent economic position (see Heberer 2001). Since minorities occupy over 50 percent of the People's Republic's surface area, they sit on top of a great proportion of its mineral and forest resources. Minority elites complain, albeit privately, that what is rightly theirs is being exported for the benefit of colonialists in the big cities and in China proper generally.

Second, since the minority regions of China are sparsely populated in comparison to China proper, central planners have at various times seen these areas as convenient outlets for surplus population. This availability of "nearly empty" territory, along with the desire to move more Han into the peripheries for security reasons and the lack of trained personnel among most of the minorities, has meant a great influx of Han settlers, merchants, cadres, teachers, and other government personnel into all minority regions at various times beginning in the 1950s. In Xinjiang, for example, approximately 5.7 million, or 38 percent of the 1990 population of 15 million, was Han; of those 5.7 million Han, 2.2 million were composed of the soldier corps, or *bingtuan*, the descendants of the armies sent to secure the area in the 1950s, who now dot the whole region with their massive agricultural colonies (Rudelson 1997: 22, 37). In Inner Mongolia, most Han in-migration has consisted of individual families moving at government instigation; they are more scattered, but Han now compose about 80 percent of the 22 million people of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region; Mongols, by contrast, are only about 15 percent (Borchigud n.d.). As a final example, Han migration into Tibet was not encouraged until the late 1980s, but since that time there has been considerable in-migration, which has been one important issue in the repeated civil unrest engaged in by local nationalists in Tibet (Schwartz 1994: 202–6). Almost nowhere are minorities entirely in charge of their own economic development. At the same time, members of minority groups in many areas nevertheless work hard, both as government cadres and as individual agriculturalists and entrepreneurs, to bring development to their own regions.

Third, even as the country has moved in the 1980s and 1990s away from the Marxist-Leninist strategies of development toward the strategy of building a market economy, a large number of minority regions have marketed a commodity available only to them: their ethnicity itself. Ethnic tourism, by both Chinese and foreigners, has come to China in a big way in the last fifteen years, and it is often promoted in minority regions as the way to create income in those areas for development (Oakes 1995, 1998; Cheung 1995a; Schein 1989, 1997,

been a factor in the revival of ethnicity during the reform era. Some areas, such as the Dali plain, home of the majority of the Bai people, who were quite acculturated to Han ways by the early part of this century, have seen a revival of ethnic things from clothing to religious ceremonies in order to provide an ethnic atmosphere for tourists. In this and other areas, along with the revival of ethnic cultural forms and customs has come private entrepreneurship on the part of minority individuals who manufacture and sell crafts to individual tourists while their communities are paid by tour operators (and indirectly, of course, by the tourists themselves) to display songs, dances, food, and other ethnic elements for the tourists to enjoy (Oakes 1995, 1998; Cheung 1995a; Schein 1999).

Variation in Minorities' Participation in and Reactions to Development

Economic development, in the form of both infrastructural construction and rising living standards, has been a real feature of life in minority areas of China since 1980. At the same time, minority regions have suffered almost uniformly from the twin plagues of resource extraction and Han migration, meaning that the benefits of development in most areas are less than what they might otherwise be. And as the state continues to promote nationwide development in a way that integrates the minority regions into dependency or interdependency with the geographic core of China proper, different regions react differently. In Tibet and Xinjiang, and to a large extent in Inner Mongolia also, many members of minority groups see development in quite critical terms, especially as it brings more and more Han people and Han culture into the regions. People are glad to have regained a measure of religious and cultural freedom but still wish, frankly, that the Chinese would go away. They tolerate and participate in tourism and even turn it to the advantage of the local separatist cause, since foreigners are likely to side with peoples campaigning for self-determination (Schwartz 1994: 201).

In other regions, such as the Southwest, there is enormous resentment toward Han people in general, over issues of resource extraction, immigration, and the superior, condescending attitudes of Han toward minorities. For example, I rode once in a car with a Yi driver, a Yi scholar and a Meng cadre to visit a Hui township. When we got going, the Meng cadre, a Communist Party member and rather fierce custodian of her unit's resources, burst out, in the local dialect of Liangshan, "Today's certainly gonna be fun. No Hans along" (Jintian yiding hui haoshua. Meidei Hanchu). The local leaders of ethnic minority communities, however, have bought in wholeheartedly to their membership in the

Chinese nation, and vigorously promote such integrative measures as ethnic tourism, showing the glories of their own culture to Han and foreign visitors; ethnic education to allow members of their own communities to participate in building up their own corners of China; and the ethnicization of the local administration, which allows them to set at least the details of the agenda of development, though they have little control over major extractive industries or immigration into their areas.

This book is about one of those areas where ethnically non-Han people, members of officially designated or self-promoted minority ethnic groups, are trying to make their way within the Chinese nation to a more respected position. Because they are parts of the Chinese nation, they communicate at least partly in the metalanguages of ethnic identification and of ethnology and ethnohistory. But because they also speak in their own languages, verbal and symbolic, and because their identity was differently constituted before and during the collective period, they have different approaches to being ethnic today.

The New Role of Ethnology: A More Open Conversation?

Since the late 1980s there also seems to have been a change in the attitude expressed by Chinese scholars of ethnology and ethnohistory toward the history and society of minority peoples. The old normalizing paradigm, based on the five stages of history supplemented by Lewis Henry Morgan's nineteenth-century account of cultural evolution, is no longer unquestionable orthodoxy, and class struggle is no longer a prescribed ingredient of ethnohistorical analysis. There is even a possibility of questioning both the premises of the language of ethnic identification: maybe Stalin's criteria are inapplicable, as suggested in general by Lin (1987) and Jiang (1985), and there may be situations, like that of the Naze described in chapters 11 and 12 of this book, where ethnic identity is so fluid that no conclusive identification can be made (Li Shaoming 1986, Li Xingxing 1994). In addition, the characterization of such modes of production as "slave society" among the Nuosu in Liangshan has also been severely questioned (Ma Erzi 1993).

If we compare a few article titles from the annual journal *Liangshan Nationalities Studies* (Liangshan minzu yanjiu), established in 1992, with the contents of the general report on Yi society cited above, we immediately see a difference:

"Nurturing the Market Economy Is the Key to Alleviating Poverty in the Poor Yi Districts of Liangshan"

"An Investigation into Commercial Activity by Village Yi Women in the City of Xichang"

"Miscellaneous Thoughts on the Clan Question among the Liangshan Yi"

"Mr. Leng Guangdian [a famous Nuosu leader during the Republican period], Who Encouraged Me to Attend School"

And, in a volume recently edited at the Nationalities University in Beijing, "A Trial Discussion of Remnant Caste Attitudes in Yi Areas of Liangshan" (Lin Yaohua 1993). It is clear that the disciplines of ethnology, ethnohistory, and linguistics, while still dedicated to the state projects of nation-building and development, no longer must do so within a rigid, normalizing paradigm.

In this new atmosphere, collaborative research with foreign scholars is not only tolerated but positively encouraged, even though the scientific paradigms of Chinese and foreign ethnologists are still widely divergent. Where they diverge most sharply, I contend, is in the presence of a self-critical discourse in Western anthropology since the 1970s and the virtual absence of such discourse in Chinese ethnology. There seem to cosmopolitan-trained anthropologists to be great similarities between the kind of colonial normalizing projects aided by European ethnologists during the first part of the twentieth century and the kind of applied anthropology in service of state- and nation-building described earlier in this chapter (Schein 1999, chaps. 4 and 5). But because of the unfree political atmosphere in Communist China, as well as the sincere belief of many ethnologists in the orthodox Marxist model of historical progression and its implications for projects of national development, the basic assumptions behind the state-directed and inspired projects are just now beginning to be questioned, and never publicly or in print. In addition, Chinese nationalism, as described in chapter 2, remains a powerful emotional force for almost everyone who has spent her or his life entirely in China, and even for some people who have traveled outside. To question the basic unity of the *Zhonghua minzu* is not only politically risky; for many people it is emotionally wrenching. Western scholars, by contrast, question everything, and as a result, collaboration between Western anthropologists and Chinese ethnologists remains uneasy, even with the relative opening of the Chinese field to new ideas.

It is in this kind of a situation that I conducted the three periods of field research and several short visits during which I collected the data for this book. In doing so, I did not simply observe and record the varied and changing bases of ethnic identity in Liangshan: I also participated in a minor way in their creation and formation. My essays on Yi culture and society will soon appear in

a Chinese-language edition (Harrell 2000b), as, I suspect, will this book not long afterward. The fact that Nuosu and Han scholars will certainly be reading this book within a few years, and perhaps even Prmi and Naze scholars also, demonstrates perhaps better than anything else the interaction not only of the discourses of ethnohistory, ethnology, and ethnic identification within China, but also their increasing interaction with a global ethnological and critical cultural studies discourse. The process of discursive interaction is treated briefly in chapter 9; Louisa Schein (1999) treats it at far greater length. But here we must first sketch our own version of the discourses of ethnohistory, ethnology, and ethnic identification.

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