

# BECOMING NATIONAL

A READER

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## The Origins of Nations

Anyone exploring the shape and origins of the modern world must soon stumble on the power and ubiquity of nations. In a sense, nothing so clearly marks out the modern era and defines our attitudes and sentiments as national consciousness and nationalist ideology. Not only in everyday political and social life, but also in our underlying assumptions, the nation and its nationalism provide a stable framework for good or ill and define the goals and values of most collective activity. The modern world has become inconceivable and unintelligible without nations and nationalism; international relations, in particular, though they deal in the first place with the relations between states, are built around the premises of nationalism.

It follows that a fundamental way to grasp the nature and shape of the modern world is through an exploration of the nature and origins of nations. This is, of course, a vast subject whose investigation could fill several volumes. Here I can only look at the broad outlines of such an investigation. In particular, I shall be concerned with the 'prehistory' of nations, the way in which collective identities in pre-modern eras helped to shape modern nations. Only in this way through an historical and sociological exploration of how pre-modern communities shaped our world of nations, can we really begin to grasp the power and significance of today's nations and nationalism.

### THE "NATION" AND "NATIONALISM"

We can begin by narrowing down our enquiry to three questions. The first concerns the relationship between abstractions and realities. The "nation" is often seen as an abstraction, something that nationalists, and Elites in general, have "constructed" to serve their partisan ends. On this reading, nations lack tangibility or any "primordial" character. They constitute mere ideals, or mere legitimations and political arguments (Breuilly 1982, pp. 1-41; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Sathyamurthy 1983).

Against this fashionable view, the so-called "primordialists" argued for the "reality" of nations, and the almost "natural" quality of ethnic belonging. National sentiment is no construct, it has a real, tangible, mass base. At its root is a feeling of kinship, of the extended family, that distinguishes national from every other kind of group sentiment (Connor 1978; Fishman 1980; Smith 1981a, pp. 63-86; Horowitz 1985, pp. 55-92; Stack 1986, pp. 1-11).

Clearly, our investigation of the origins of nations cannot proceed far, until this fundamental question of whether the nation be viewed as construct or real historical process is resolved.

The second question is linked to the first. I have emphasized the importance, indeed the indispensability, of nations in the modern era and the modern world. The question arises whether it is fundamental in other eras and pre-modern worlds. Was there "nationalism" in antiquity? Can we find "nations" in medieval Europe or Asia? In part, of course, the answer will hinge on our definition of the nation; but equally, it will reflect our reading of the global historical process. If the "modernists" are right, if the nation is a fundamental feature only of the modern world, this will support, *prima facie*, the idea that nations are primarily abstractions and elite constructs. However, if the "perennialists" turn out to be nearer the mark, and we find nations and nationalism prior to the rise of the modern world from the sixteenth century (or the French Revolution) onwards, we may well have to change our view of the whole historical process. Nations might still be constructs, but ancient elites, or medieval ones, might be as adept at inventing them as their modern counterparts. This would inevitably devalue the importance attributed to specifically "modern" developments, like bureaucracy and capitalism, in the rise of nations, which "modernists" tend to emphasize (Naim 1977, pp. 92-125; Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983).

The last question again concerns the nature of the concept of the nation. Should we view it as a largely political unit, or mainly a social and cultural entity? Can there be a cultural nationalism, which is not also *ipso facto* political? Or should we regard nations as operating on all these levels at once? These are important questions when it comes to looking at the political ramifications of the nation. Again, there are those who would downgrade its cultural importance for collective identity (Breuilly 1982); while others emphasize questions of cultural identity and social cohesion (Barnard 1965; Hutchinson 1987).

The answers to these three sets of questions will, I think, furnish important clues to our exploration of the processes by which nations were formed.

Let me start with a working definition of the nation. A nation is a named community of history and culture, possessing a unified territory, economy, mass education system and common legal rights. I take this definition from the ideals and blueprints of generations of nationalists and their followers. It sums up an "ideal type" of the nation that is fairly widely accepted today, even if given units of population aspiring to be full nations in this sense, lack one or other of these characteristics in lesser or greater degree. For example, in a unit of population aspiring to constitute a full nation, certain categories of the population may be excluded from the full exercise of the common legal rights. Or they may not

enjoy equal access to the common system of education, or equal mobility in the territorial economy. Alternatively, they may enjoy all these attributes and rights, yet be treated by the majority as in some sense cultural aliens, standing outside the sense of history and much of the culture of the majority, as the Jews were felt to be at the time of Dreyfus, both in France and outside, or the Asians in East Africa after decolonization.

What this means is that the nation is not a once-for-all, all-or-nothing, concept; and that historical nations are ongoing processes, sometimes slow in their formation, at other times faster, often jagged and discontinuous, as some features emerge or are created, while others lag. In Europe, nations have been forming, I would argue, from the medieval period; in several other parts of the world, this process, or processes, have been more recent. It also means that both objective factors outside human control, and human will and action, go into the creation of nations. Geographical environment, and the political accidents of warfare, may provide a setting for a group to form into a nation; but, whether it will subsequently do so, may depend on how far the group, or its ruling classes, become conscious of their identity, and reinforce it through education, legal codes and administrative centralization (Tilly 1975, pp. 3-163).<sup>1</sup>

If this is accepted, it means in turn that nations can be seen as both constructs or visions of nationalist (or other) elites, but equally as real, historical formations that embody a number of analytically separable processes over long time-spans. It is these processes, as much as any visions, that form the object of our analysis.

Where does this leave "nationalism"? I should define nationalism as an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining the autonomy, unity and identity of an existing or potential "nation." I should also stress its often minority status as a movement. As a movement, nationalism often antedates, and seeks to create, the nation, even if it often pretends that the nation already exists (Smith 1973a; 1983a, pp. 153-81).

Of course, nationalists cannot, and do not, create nations *ex nihilo*. There must be, at least, some elements in the chosen population and its social environment who favour the aspirations and activities of the nationalist visionaries. To achieve their common goals—autonomy, unity, identity—there need to be some core networks of association and culture, around which and on which nations can be "built." Language groups are usually regarded as the basic network of nations; but religious sects, like the Druse, Sikhs or Maronites may also form the starting-point for "reconstructing" the nation. So may a certain kind of historic territory, for example, the mountain fastnesses of Switzerland or Kurdistan, or island homelands like Iceland or Japan.

Besides, not all nations are the product of nationalist political endeavour. The English or Castilian nations, for example, owed more to state centralization, warfare and cultural homogeneity than to any nationalist movement. Vital for any nation is the growth and spread of a "national sentiment" outwards from the centre and usually downwards through the strata of the population. It is in and through the myths and symbols of the common past that such a national sentiment finds its expression; and these too may develop over long periods.<sup>2</sup>

## THE "ETHNIC CORE"

So much for initial definitions. Let us turn to the processes of nation-formation themselves.

At the turn of this century, it was quite common to argue that nations were immemorial. People talked of the ancient Greek, Persian and Egyptian nations, and even equated them with the present-day nations of those names. They certainly saw modern Bulgarian or French nations as the lineal descendants of their medieval counterparts. The familiar view was that nations were natural and perennial; people had a nationality much as they had speech or sight. Clearly, such a view of the nation is untenable. Nations are not perennial; they can be formed, and human will and effort play an important part in the process. People can also change their nationality, or at least their descendants can, over a period of time. Moreover, it is extremely doubtful, at the least, whether modern Greeks, Persians and Egyptians are lineal descendants of ancient Greeks, Persians and Egyptians. Are we not guilty here of a 'retrospective nationalism' to epochs that lacked all sense of nationality (Levi 1965; Breuilly 1982)?

For these reasons, recent scholars have tended to emphasize the modernity of nations. The modernists argue that the nation is a modern construct of nationalists and other elites, and the product of peculiarly modern conditions like industrialism. They point out that ancient Egypt and even ancient Greece could boast no standardized, public, mass-education system, and that common legal rights, in so far as they existed, were restricted to particular classes. Because of its territorial unity, ancient Egypt did indeed enjoy more of a common economy than other ancient kingdoms, but it was unusual. In Assyria, Greece, Persia and China, local economies of different regions reflected a lack of territorial compactness of a kind unknown in the contemporary world.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly, in antiquity and much of the medieval era, nations in the sense that we have defined them, viz. named communities of history and culture, possessed of unified territories, economies, education systems and common legal rights, are rarely, if ever, to be found. Yet does this mean that there were no durable cultural communities in antiquity or the Middle Ages? Are we being retrospective nationalists in attributing some common history and culture to ancient Greeks and Persians or medieval Serbs and Irish? I think not. Despite the many changes that these cultures had undergone, they remained recognizably distinct to their own populations and to outsiders; and cultural differentiation was as vital a factor in social life then as now. The only difference then was that the scope and role of cultural diversity operated more at the social than the political level, but even this varied between peoples and eras.

Moreover, cultural differences, then as now, were not just a matter of outside observation. The people who possessed specific cultural attributes often formed a social network or series of networks, which over the generations became what we today designate "ethnic communities." These communities of history and culture generally display a syndrome of characteristics, by which they are usually recognized. These include:

1. a common name for the unit of population included;
2. a set of myths of common origins and descent for that population;

3. some common historical memories of things experienced together;
4. a common "historic territory" or "homeland," or an association with one;
5. one or more elements of common culture—language, customs, or religion;
6. a sense of solidarity among most members of the community.

I shall call the communities that manifest these characteristics (to a lesser or greater degree) *ethnies* (the French equivalent of the ancient Greek *ethnos*), as there is no single English-language equivalent. By no means all the cultural differences that scholars have distinguished in pre-modern or modern eras, are mirrored in such *ethnies*. Many remain as "ethnic categories"; certainly, in the past, the speakers of, say, Slovakian or Ukrainian dialects, were hardly conscious of their membership in any community. It had to wait for the rise of a romantic nationalism to build communities out of these and other differences (Brock 1976; Szporluk 1979).<sup>4</sup>

However, that still leaves a multitude of *ethnies* in the ancient and medieval worlds, which at first sight resemble, but are not, nations. For example, in Sassanid Persia between the third and seventh century A.D., we find a population group with a common name; a sense of a common homeland of "Iran" that the members opposed to another fabled land of enemies, "Turan"; some common historical memories and myths of descent related to Zoroaster and the Achaemenid kings; and a sense of solidarity, ever renewed by the protracted struggle with Byzantium (Frye 1966, pp. 235-62; *Cambridge History of Iran* 1983, vol. III/1, pp. 359-477).

Although it was divided, both into *poleis* and into sub-ethnic communities, ancient Greece could also be described as an *ethnie* in this sense. We find there, too, a common name, Hellas; a set of common-origin myths about the Greeks and their main divisions; common historical memories centered the Homeric canon; common Greek dialects and a common Greek pantheon of Olympic deities; an attachment to the Greek "homeland" around the Aegean; and, above all, a shared sense of being "Greek" and not "barbarian." This did not mean that many Greeks did not intermarry, that Greek *poleis* did not fight each other most of the time, that they did not form alliances with the Persians against each other, and so on. Yet all Greeks recognized their common Greek heritage and a common Greek cultural community (Fondation Hardt 1962; Andrewes 1965; Alty 1982; Finley 1986, pp. 120-33).

Perhaps the best-known of ancient and medieval *ethnie*, the Jews, managed to retain their distinctive identity, even when most of their members were scattered in diaspora communities. A common name, common myths of origin and descent, sedulously fostered, a whole canon of historical memories centred on charismatic heroes, a common liturgical language and script, an attachment to Eretz Israel wherever they might find themselves and especially to Jerusalem, all fed a strong bond of ethnic solidarity, which outside hostility renewed with almost monotonous regularity. Again, these bonds did not prevent apostasy, intermarriage or internal class and cultural divisions, particularly between Jews of the Ashkenazi and Sephardi rite (Hirschberg 1969; Barnett 1971; Raphael 1985).

One last example, this time from medieval western Europe, must suffice to

illustrate the range of *ethnies*. Apart from their fame as builders of massive castles and cathedrals in the Romanesque style, the Normans evinced a common myth of origins and descent from Duke Rollo, a common name and historical memories of warfare and colonization, common customs and adopted language, along with an attachment to the duchy in northern France that they had conquered and settled. Above all, they maintained for nearly three centuries their *esprit de corps* as a warrior community, even when they conquered Ireland and Sicily (Jones 1973, pp. 204-40; Davis 1976).

### "VERTICAL" AND "LATERAL" ETHNIES

What all these examples have in common is an underlying sense of historical and cultural community. This sense of community pervades and regulates their social life and culture, spilling over at times into the political and military realms. On the other hand, it rarely determines their economic conditions of existence. Generally speaking, economic localism and a subsistence economy fragment the community into a series of interlocking networks. What unites these networks, in so far as it does so, is the common fund of myths, symbols, memories and values that make up the distinctive traditions passed down the generations. Through common customs and rituals, languages, arts and liturgies, this complex of myths, symbols, values and memories ensures the survival of the sense of common ethnicity, of the sense of common descent and belonging, which characterizes a "community of fate."

Yet, the example of the Norman conquerors introduces a vital distinction. As with the Sassanid Persians, but even more so, it was really only the upper strata, especially around the Court and priesthoods that constituted the Norman *ethnie*. The myths of descent and the memories of battle clustered around the ruling house; it was their genealogies and their exploits that Dudo of St. Quentin and Orderic Vitalis were called on to record and extol. At the same time, the ruling house represented a whole upper stratum of warrior-aristocrats who had founded a *regnum* in Normandy, based on common customs and myths of descent. Other classes were simply subsumed under those customs and myths; and quite often, the latter were amalgams of the heritage of the conquerors and the conquered (Reynolds 1983).

Compared, however, to the community of Greeks or Jews, that of the Norman or Sassanid Persian ruling classes was rather limited. In one sense, it was wider. The sense of common ethnicity went wherever Normans sailed, and Persian arms conquered. In another sense, it was shallower. It never really reached far down the social scale. For all Kartir's attempts to institute Zoroastrian fire-worship as a state religion, many of the Persian peasants were untouched. Although Chosroes I (A.D. 531-79) attempted to revive ancient Persian culture, he was unable to stabilize the Persian state by extending a sense of common Persian ethnicity. As McNeill puts it: "As with other urban civilizations that lacked real roots in the countryside, the results were grand and artificial, in theology as in architecture;

and Moslem conquest cut off the entire tradition in the seventh century, just as Alexander's victories had earlier disrupted the high culture of the Achaemenids" (McNeil] 1963, p. 400).

This is, perhaps, going too far. A sense of specifically Persian ethnicity remained beneath Islamization, after the Sassanid armies were defeated by the Arabs at Nihavand (642 A.D.). Islam even stimulated a Persian renaissance in poetry and the arts in the tenth and eleventh centuries, a renaissance that looked back for its inspiration to Chosroes and the Sassanids (*Cambridge History of Iran* 1975, vol. IV, pp. 595-632).

Yet the basic point remains. The Persian Sassanid *ethnie*, like the Norman, the Hittite or the Philistine, was socially limited. It was an aristocratic and "lateral" *ethnie*, as territorially wide as it was lacking in social depth. In contrast to this type, with its ragged boundaries and aristocratic culture, we find communities with much more compact boundaries, a more socially diffused culture and a greater degree of popular mobilization and fervour. This type of *ethnie* we may call "vertical" and "demotic." The Armenians, Greeks and Jews are classic examples, despite their territorial dispersion, because they lived in often segregated enclaves once they had left their clearly defined homelands. Other examples of "demotic" or "vertical" *ethnies* include the Irish, Basques, Welsh, Bretons, Czechs and Serbs, as well as the Druse, Sikhs and Maronites. Such *ethnies* are as stratified as any other, but the strata all share in a common heritage and culture, and in the common defence. Hence the ethnic bond is more exclusive and intensive, and the boundaries are more marked and more strongly upheld. Thus, in contrast to the looser ties that characterized the Philistine aristocratic pentapohs, the Israelite tribal confederation was from the outset marked by a greater ethnocentric zeal and communal mobilization for war, as well as greater ritual involvement of all strata (Kitchen 1973; Seltzer 1980, pp. 7-43).<sup>5</sup>

The distinction between "lateral" and "vertical" types of *ethnie* is important for a number of reasons. First, because it highlights a source of conflict between pre-modern ethnic communities, as aristocratic lateral *ethnie* attempted to incorporate and subdue different demotic vertical communities. It also suggests why many *ethnies*, especially of the more demotic variety, persisted over long periods, even when they experienced "character change." The Greek *ethnie*, for example, within the Eastern Roman empire was transformed in many ways by the influx of Slav immigrants. Yet they did not basically change the cultural and religious framework of Greek ethnicity, even though they grafted their customs and mores onto an existing Hellenic culture, especially in the countryside (Campbell and Sherrard 1968, pp. 19-19; Armstrong 1982, pp. 168-200). Similarly, a tenuous sense of Egyptian identity persisted even after the Arab conquest in the seventh century A.D., especially among Copts, despite the fact that any attempts to trace "descent" back to the inhabitants of ancient Egypt were bound to run into the sands. The point is that cultural forms and frameworks may outlive their physical bearers, and even the "character change" of cultural content that new immigrants and new religious movements bring with them (Atiya 1968, pp. 79-98).

One result of ethnic survival and coexistence over the long term is a patchwork or mosaic of *ethnies* in varying relationships of status and power. Quite often we

find a dominant lateral *ethnie* of landowning aristocrats like the Magyar knights or Polish *szlachta* exploiting a peasantry of different culture, Croat or Ukrainian, and so helping to preserve these cultural differences as "ethno-classes." Whenever we find lateral *ethnies* attempting to expand into territories populated by demotic, vertical communities of culture, the opportunities for a "frozen" ethnic stratification to develop are greatly increased. This has occurred, not only in Eastern Europe, but in the Middle East, southeast Asia and parts of Africa. The overall result is to preserve ethnic difference and identity right up to the onset of the age of nationalism, and afford ready-made bases for political movements of autonomy (Seton-Watson 1977, pp. 15-142; Orridge 1982).

Already certain implications of the foregoing analysis can be clarified. Only in this modern era could we expect to find unified divisions of labour, mass, public education systems and equal legal rights, all of which have come to be part and parcel of a common understanding of what we mean by the concept of the nation. Moreover, the "modernists" are right when they speak of nations being "reconstructed" (but not "invented") out of pre-existing social networks and cultural elements, often by intellectuals.

The modernist definition of the nation omits important components. Even today, a nation qua nation must possess a common history and culture, that is to say, common myths of origin and descent, common memories and common symbols of culture. Otherwise, we should be speaking only of territorial states. It is the conjunction, and interpenetration, of these cultural or "ethnic" elements with the political, territorial, educational and economic ones, that we may term "civic," that produce a modern nation. Today's nations are as much in need of common myths, memories and symbols, as were yesterday's *ethnies*, for it is these former that help to create and preserve the networks of solidarity that underpin and characterize nations. They also endow nations with their individuality. So that, while nations can be read as reconstructions of intellectual and other elites, they are also legitimately viewed as configurations of historical processes, which can be analysed as real trends.<sup>6</sup>

Because nations embody ethnic as well as civic components, they tend to form around pre-existing "ethnic cores." The fact that pre-modern eras have been characterized by different types of *ethnie* is therefore vital to our understanding of the ways in which modern nations emerged. The number, location and durability of such *ethnies* are crucial for the formation of historical nations. The relations of power and exploitation between different kinds of *ethnie* also help to determine the bases for historical nations. It is this latter circumstance that provides an essential key to the processes of nation-formation in modern times.

## BUREAUCRATIC "INCORPORATION"

The two basic kinds of ethnic core, the lateral and the vertical, also furnish the two main routes by which nations have been created.

Taking the lateral route first, we find that aristocratic *ethnies* have the potential for self-perpetuation, provided they can incorporate other strata of the population.

A good many of these lateral *ethnics* cannot do so. Hittites, Philistines, Mycenaean, even Assyrians, failed to do so, and they and their cultures disappeared with the demise of their states (Burney and Lang 1971, pp. 86-126; Kitchen 1973; Saggs 1984, pp. 117-21). Other lateral *ethnics* survived by "changing their character," as we saw with Persians, Egyptians and Ottoman Turks, while preserving a sense of common descent and some dim collective memories.

Still others grafted new ethnic and cultural elements onto their common fund of myths, symbols and memories, and spread them out from the core area and down through the social scale. They did so, of course, in varying degrees. The efforts of the Amhara kings, for example, were rather limited in scope; yet they managed to retain their Monophysite Abyssinian identity in their heartlands (Atiya 1968; Ullendorff 1973, pp. 54-92). That of the Castilians was more successful. They managed to form the core of a Spanish state (and empire) that expelled the Muslim rulers and almost united the Iberian peninsula. Yet, even their success pales before that of their Frankish and Norman counterparts.

In fact, the latter three efforts at "bureaucratic incorporation" were to prove of seminal historical importance. In all three cases, lower strata and outlying regions were gradually incorporated in the state, which was grounded upon a dominant ethnic core. This was achieved by administrative and fiscal means, and by the mobilization of sections of the populations for inter-state warfare, as in the Anglo-French wars (Keeney 1972). An upper-class *ethnic*, in other words, managed to evolve a relatively strong and stable administrative apparatus, which could be used to provide cultural regulation and thereby define a new and wider cultural identity (Corrigan and Sayer 1985). In practice, this meant varying degrees of accommodation between the upper-class culture and those prevalent among the lower strata and peripheral regions; yet it was the upper-class culture that set its stamp on the state and on the evolving national identity.

Perhaps the most clear-cut example is afforded by British developments. As there had been an Anglo-Saxon kingdom based originally on Wessex before the Norman Conquest, the conquered populations could not be treated simply as a servile peasantry. As a result, we find considerable intermarriage, linguistic borrowing, elite mobility and finally a fusion of linguistic culture, within a common religio-political framework.

In other words, bureaucratic incorporation of subject *ethnics* entailed a considerable measure of cultural fusion and social intermingling between Anglo-Saxon, Danish and Norman elements, especially from the thirteenth century on. By the time of Edward I and the Anglo-French and Scottish wars, linguistic fusion had stabilized into Chaucerian English and a "British" myth served to weld the disparate ethnic communities together (Seton-Watson 1977, pp. 22-31; Smith 1985).

I am not arguing that an English nation was fully formed by the late fourteenth century. There was little economic unity as yet, despite growing fiscal and judicial intervention by the royal state. The boundaries of the kingdom, too, both with Scotland and in France, were often in dispute. In no sense can one speak of a public, mass-education system, even for the middle classes. As for legal rights, despite the assumptions behind Magna Carta, they were common to all only in

the most minimal senses. For the full development of these civic elements of nationhood, one would have to wait for the Industrial Revolution and its effects (Reynolds 1984, pp. 250-331).

The ethnic elements of the nation, on the other hand, were well developed. By the fourteenth century or slightly later, a common name and myth of descent, promulgated originally by Geoffrey of Monmouth, were widely current, as were a variety of historical memories (MacDougall 1982, pp. 7-17). These were fed by the fortunes of wars in Scotland and France. Similarly, a sense of common culture based on language and ecclesiastical organization had emerged. So had a common strong attachment to the homeland of the island kingdom, which in turn bred a sense of solidarity, despite internal class-cleavages. The bases of both the unitary state and a compact nation had been laid, and laid by a lateral Norman-origin *ethnic* that was able to develop its regnal administration to incorporate the Anglo-Saxon population. Yet the full ideology of Englishness had to wait for late-sixteenth- and seventeenth-century developments, when the old British myth gave way to a more potent middle-class "Saxon" mythology of ancient liberties (MacDougall 1982, chs. 2-4).

A similar process of bureaucratic incorporation by an upper-class lateral *ethnic* can be discerned in France. Some fusion of upper-stratum Frankish with subject Romano-Gallic culture occurred under the Christianized Merovingians, but a regnal solidarity is really only apparent in northern France at the end of the twelfth century. It was in this era that earlier myths of Trojan descent, applied to the Franks, were resuscitated for all the people of northern France. At the same time, *the pays d'oc*, with its different language, customs and myths of descent, remained for some time outside the orbit of northern bureaucratic incorporation (Reynolds 1984, pp. 276-89; Bloch 1961, vol. II, pp. 431-7).

Of course, Capetian bureaucratic incorporation from Philip II onwards was able to draw on the glory and myths of the old Frankish kingdom and Charlemagne's heritage. This was partly because the kingdom of the Eastern Franks came to be known as the *regnum Teutonicorum*, with a separate identity. However, it was also due to the special link between French dynasties and the Church, notably the archbishopric of Rheims. The backing of the French clergy, and the ceremony of anointing at coronations, were probably more crucial to the prestige and survival of a French monarchy in northern France before the battle of Bouvines (1214) than the fame of the schools of Paris or even the military tenacity of the early Capetians. There was a sacred quality inhering in the dynastic *mythomoteur* of the Capetians and their territory that went back to the Papal coronation of Charlemagne and Papal legitimation of Pepin's usurpation in A.D. 754, which the Pope called a "new kingdom of David." The religious language is echoed centuries later, when at the end of the thirteenth century Pope Boniface declared: "... like the people of Israel... the kingdom of France [is] a peculiar people chosen by the Lord to carry out the orders of Heaven" (Davis 1958, pp. 298-313; Lewis 1974, pp. 57-70; Armstrong 1982, pp. 152-9).

Though there is much debate as to the "feudal" nature of the Capetian monarchy, the undoubted fact is that an originally Frankish ruling-class *ethnic* managed, after many vicissitudes, to establish a relatively efficient and centralized

royal administration over north and central France (later southern France). So it became able to furnish those "civic" elements of compact territory, unified economy, and linguistic and legal standardization that from the seventeenth century onwards spurred the formation of a French nation as we know it. The process, however, was not completed until the end of the nineteenth century. Many regions retained their local character, even after the French Revolution. It required the application of Jacobin nationalism to mass education and conscription under the Third Republic to turn, in Eugen Weber's well-known phrase, "peasants into Frenchmen" (Kohn 1967; Weber 1979).<sup>7</sup>

An even more radical "change of character" occasioned by attempted bureaucratic incorporation by a "lateral" ethnic state is provided by Spain. Here it was the Castilian kingdom that formed the fulcrum of Christian resistance to Muslim power. Later, united with the kingdom of Aragon, it utilized religious community as an instrument of homogenization, expelling those who, like the Jews and Moriscos, could not be made to conform. Here, too, notions of *limpieza de sangre* bolstered the unity of the Spanish crown, which was beset by demands on several sides from those claiming ancient rights and manifesting ancient cultures. Quite apart from the Portuguese secession and the failed Catalan revolt, Basques, Galicians and Andalusians retained their separate identities into the modern era. The result is a less unified national community, and more polyethnic state, than either Britain or France. With the spread of ideological nationalism in the early nineteenth century, these ethnic communities felt justified in embarking on varying degrees of autonomous development, whose reverberations are still felt today. Yet, most members of these communities shared an overarching Spanish political sentiment and culture, over and beyond their often intense commitment to Basque, Catalan or Galician identity and culture (Atkinson 1960; Payne 1971; Greenwood 1977).

Historically, the formation of modern nations owes a profound legacy to the development of England, France and Spain. This is usually attributed to their possession of military and economic power at the relevant period, the period of burgeoning nationalism and nations. As the great powers of the period, they inevitably became models of the nation, the apparently successful format of population unit, for everyone else. Yet in the case of England and France, and to a lesser extent Spain, this was not accidental. It was the result of the early development of a particular kind of "rational" bureaucratic administration, aided by the development of merchant capital, wealthy urban centres and professional military forces and technology. The "state" formed the matrix of the new population-unit's format, the "nation." It aided the type of compact, unified, standardized and culturally homogenized unit and format that the nation exemplifies.

Some would say that the state actually "created" the nation, that royal administration, taxation and mobilization endowed the subjects within its jurisdiction with a sense of corporate loyalty and identity. Even in the West, this overstates the case. The state was certainly a necessary condition for the formation of the national loyalties we recognize today. However, its operations in turn owed much to earlier assumptions about kingdoms and peoples, and to the presence of core ethnic communities around which these states were built up. The process of

ethnic fusion, particularly apparent in England and France, which their lateral *ethnies* encouraged through the channels of bureaucratic incorporation, was only possible because of a relatively homogeneous ethnic core. We are not here talking about actual descent, much less about "race," but about the *sense* of ancestry and identity that people possess. Hence the importance of myths and memories, symbols and values, embodied in customs and traditions and in artistic styles, legal codes and institutions. In *this* sense of "ethnicity," which is more about cultural perceptions than physical demography, albeit rooted perceptions and assumptions, England from an early date, and France somewhat later, came to form fairly homogeneous *ethnies*. These *ethnies* in turn facilitated the development of homogenizing states, extending the whole idea of an *ethnie* into realms and onto levels hitherto unknown, to form the relatively novel concept of the nation.

### THE "REDISCOVERY" OF THE "ETHNIC PAST"

In contrast to the route of bureaucratic incorporation by lateral *ethnies*, the process by which demotic *ethnies* may become the bases for nations is only indirectly affected by the state and its administration. This was either because they were subject communities—the usual case—or because, as in Byzantium and Russia, the state represented interests partially outside its core *ethnie*. This subdivision also produces interesting variants on the constitutive political myth, or *mythomoteur*, of vertical *ethnies*\*

In all these communities, the fund of cultural myths, symbols, memories and values was transmitted not only from generation to generation, but also throughout the territory occupied by the community or its enclaves, and down the social scale. The chief mechanism of this persistence and diffusion was an organized religion with a sacred text, liturgy, rites and clergy, and sometimes a specialized secret lore and script. It is the social aspects of salvation religions, in particular, that have ensured the persistence and shaped the contours of demotic *ethnies*. Among Orthodox Greeks and Russians, Monophysite Copts and Ethiopians, Gregorian Armenians, Jews, Catholic Irish and Poles, myths and symbols of descent and election, and the ritual and sacred texts in which they were embodied, helped to perpetuate the traditions and social bonds of the community.

At the same time, the very hold of an ethnic religion posed grave problems for the formation of nations from such communities. It transpired that "religion-shaped" peoples, whose ethnicity owed so much to the symbols and organization of an ancient faith, were often constrained in their efforts to become "full" nations. Or rather, their intellectuals may find it harder to break out of the conceptual mould of a religio-ethnic community. So many members of such demotic *ethnies* simply assumed that theirs was already, and indeed always had been, a nation. Indeed, according to some definitions they were. They possessed in full measure, after all, the purely ethnic components of the nation. Arabs and Jews, for example, had common names, myths of descent, memories and religious cultures, as well as attachments to an original homeland and a persisting, if subdivided, sense of ethnic solidarity. Did this not suffice for nationhood? All

that seemed to be necessary was to attain independence and a state for the community (Baron 1960, pp. 213-18; Carmichael 1967; Patai 1983).

Yet, as these examples demonstrate, matters were not so simple. Quite apart from adverse geo-political factors, social and cultural features internal to the Arab and Jewish communities made the transition from *ethnie* to nation difficult and problematic. The Arabs have been faced, of course, by their geographic extent, which flies in the face of the ideal of a 'compact nation' in its clearly demarcated habitat. They have also had to contend with the varied histories of the sub-divisions of the "Arab nation," ranging from the Moroccan kingdoms to those of Egypt or Saudi Arabia. There is also the legacy of a divisive modern colonialism, which has often reinforced historical differences and shaped the modern Arab states with their varied economic patterns. Mass, public education has, in turn, like legal rights, been the product of the colonial and post-colonial states and their elites. Above all, however, the involvement of most Arabs and most Arab states with Islam, whose *umma* both underpins and challenges the circle and significance of an "Arab nation," creates an ambiguous unity and destiny, and overshadows efforts by Arab intelligentsia to rediscover an "Arab past" (Sharabi 1970; Smith 1973b).

The Jews were also faced with problems of geographic dispersion, accentuated by their lack of a recognized territory and exile from an ancient homeland. True, in the Pale of Settlement and earlier in Poland, something approaching a public religious education system and common legal rights (albeit restricted) had been encouraged by the *kahal* system and its successors. Yet, though Jews, like Armenians, were compelled to occupy certain niches in the European economy, we can hardly characterize their enclave communities as models of economic unity, let alone a territorial division of labour. Quite apart from these obstacles to national unity, there were also the ambivalent attitudes and self-definitions of Judaism and its rabbinical authorities. Only later, did some rabbis and one wing of Orthodoxy come to support Jewish nationalism and its Zionist project, despite the traditional hopes for messianic restoration to Zion of generations of the Orthodox. The concept of Jewish self-help had become alien to the medieval interpretation of Judaism; and the general notion that the Jews were a "nation in exile" actually strengthened this passivity (Hertzberg 1960; Vital 1975, pp. 3-20).

It was in these circumstances of popular resignation amid communal decline, set against Western national expansion, that a new stratum of secular intelligentsia emerged. Their fundamental role, as they came to see it, was to transform the relationship of a religious tradition to its primary bearers, the demotic *ethnies*. We must, of course, place this development in the larger context of a series of revolutions—socio-economic, political and cultural—which began in the early-modern period in the West. As we saw, the primary motor of these transformations was the formation of a new type of professionalized, bureaucratic state on the basis of a relatively homogeneous core *ethnie*. Attempts by older political formations to take over some of the dimensions of the Western "rational state" and so streamline their administrations and armies, upset the old accommodations of these empires to their constituent *ethnies*. In the Habsburg, Ottoman and Romanov

empires, increasing state intervention, coupled with incipient urbanization and commerce, placed many demotic *ethnies* under renewed pressures. The spread of nationalist ideas from the late-eighteenth century on, carried with it new ideals of compact population-units, popular representation and cultural diversity, which affected the ruling classes of these empires and even more the educated stratum of their subject communities (see the essays in Sugar and Lederer 1969; more generally, Smith 1986a, pp. 129-52).

For the subject vertical *ethnie*, a secularizing intelligentsia led by educator-intellectuals supplied the motor of transformation, as well as the cultural framework, which among lateral *ethnie* had been largely provided by the incorporating bureaucratic state. It was this intelligentsia that furnished the new communal self-definitions and goals. These redefinitions were not simple "inventions," or wholesale applications of Western models. Rather, they were derived from a process of "rediscovery" of the ethnic past. The process tended to reverse the religious self-view: instead of "the people" acting as a passive but chosen vessel of salvation, subordinate to the divine message, that message and its salvation ethic became the supreme expression and creation of the people's genius as it developed in history (Haim 1962; Smith 1983a, pp. 230-56).<sup>9</sup>

At the centre of the self-appointed task of the intelligentsia stood the rediscovery and realization of the community. This entailed a moral and political revolution. In the place of a passive and subordinate minority, living precariously on the margins of the dominant ethnic society and its state, a new compact and politically active nation had to be created ("recreated" in nationalist terminology). From now on, the centre stage was to be occupied by the people, henceforth identified with "the masses," who would replace the aristocratic heroes of old. This was all part of the process of creating a unified, and preferably autarchic, community of legally equal members or "citizens," who would become the fount of legitimacy and state power. However, for this to occur, the people had to be purified of the dross of centuries—their lethargy, divisions, alien elements, ignorance and so on—and emancipate themselves. That was the primary task of the educator-intellectuals.

The transition, then, from demotic *ethnie* to civic nation carries with it several related processes and movements. These include:

1. a movement from subordinate accommodation and passivity of a peripheral minority to an active, assertive and politicized community with a unified policy;
2. a movement towards a universally recognized "homeland" for the community, a compact, clearly demarcated territory;
3. economic unification of all members of the territorially demarcated community, with control over its own resources, and movement towards economic autarchy in a competitive world of nations;
4. turning ethnic members into legal citizens by mobilizing them for political ends and conferring on each common civil, social and political rights and obligations;
5. placing the people at the centre of moral and political concern and cele-



brating the new role of the masses, by re-educating them in national values, myths and memories.

That traditional elites, especially the guardians of sacred texts which had so long defined the demotic *ethnic*, might resist these changes, was to be expected. This meant that the intellectuals had to undercut earlier definitions of the community by re-presenting their novel conceptions through ancient symbols and formats. These were in no sense mere manipulations (though there undoubtedly was individual manipulation, such as Tilak's use of the Kali cult in Bengal); there is no need to unmask what are so patently selective readings of an ethnic past. Yet selection can take place only within strict limits, limits set by the pre-existing myths, symbols, customs and memories of vertical *ethnies*. That still leaves considerable scope for choice of symbol or myth and understanding of history. Can we discern a pattern in the selective readings of educator-intellectuals?<sup>10</sup>

There were, I think, two main patterns by which educator-intellectuals could engage the community for their moral and political goals. Both had to be couched in the language and symbolism of the people, in the sense that any novelties must find an echo in popular historical traditions. The first pattern was the uses of landscape, or what we may call "poetic spaces." A nation, after all, needs before all else a national territory or homeland, and not just anywhere. The geographic terrain must be simultaneously an historic home. How do you create this sense of "homeland" for people who are either divided into small localities or scattered outside the chosen area? The answer is to endow the chosen home with poetic and historical connotations, or rather with an historical poetry. The aim is to integrate the homeland into a romantic drama of the progress of the nation. One way to do this, is to historicize natural features of the chosen area. This was, of course, a feature of older *ethnies*, with their myths of descent from gods who dwelt on great mountains like Ida, Olympus or Meru. A modern romantic historiography of the homeland turns lakes and mountains, rivers and valleys into the "authentic" repository of popular virtues and collective history. So the Jungfrau became a symbol of Swiss virtues of purity and naturalness, and the *Vierwaldstättersee* the national theatre of the historical drama of the foundation of the *Eidgenossenschaft* in 1291. In this poetic history, fact and legend become fused to produce a stirring symbol of purity and rectitude, and a dramatic myth of resistance to tyranny. Again, the English or Russian paeans to their respective landscapes, with rolling meadows or wide open spaces and birch trees, immortalized by painters and musicians like Constable and Elgar, or Levitan and Borodin, celebrate the community's involvement in its homeland habitat, turning bare nature into poetic history (Kohn 1957; Gray 1971, pp. 9-64; Crump 1986).

Another way to integrate the nation with its homeland is to naturalize historical features. Tells, temples, castles and stone circles are treated as natural components of an ethnic landscape, with an historical poetry of their own. The uses of Stonehenge are instructive in this respect. Interpreted in many ways, Stonehenge in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century "historical revival" became so much a symbol of the antiquity of Britain and British ancestry, that it was difficult to erase so "natural" a part of the British scene from the ethnic consciousness of the nation

(Chippindale 1983, pp. 96-125). Similarly, the mysterious stone buildings of Great Zimbabwe, which seem to have grown out of their natural surroundings, despite the skill with which the Elliptical Temple was obviously constructed, suggest the rootedness of the modern nation of Zimbabwe in its natural habitat. By implying this close link between history and nature, the modern educator-intellectual is able to define the community in space and tell us "where we are" (Chamberlin 1979, pp. 27-35).

The other main pattern of involvement of the community in the national revolution was even more potent. If the uses of landscape define the communal homeland, the uses of history, or what I may call the cult of "golden ages," direct the communal destiny by telling us who we are, whence we came and why we are unique. The answers lie in those "myths of ethnic origins and descent" that form the groundwork of every nationalist mythology. Since the aims of nationalist educator-intellectuals are not academic, but social, i.e. the moral purification and political mobilization of the people, communal history must be taught as a series of foundation and liberation myths and as a cult of heroes. Together, these make up the vision of the golden age that must inspire present regeneration (Smith 1984a).

Typical of such uses of history is the Gaelic revival's vision of a Celtic, pre-Christian Irish golden age set in a half-mythical, half-historical time before the fifth-century conversion to Christianity by St. Patrick. When O'Grady and Lady Gregory rediscovered the Ulster Cycle with its legends of Cuchulain, they found a golden age of High Kings, *fianna* bands *wdfilid* guilds in a rural and free Celtic society that seemed the spiritual model for a modern Irish nation. The rediscovery of an early Celtic art and literature seemed to confirm the image of a once-great community, whose progress had been cut off by Norman, and later Protestant, English invasions. The cult of Celtic heroes in a free Gaelic Ireland suggested what was authentically "ours" and therefore what "we" must do to be "ourselves" once again, (Chadwick 1970, pp. 134-5, 268-71; Lyons 1979, pp. 57-83; Hutchinson 1987).

A similar process of ethnic reconstruction took place in Finland during the last century. In this case, a subordinate vertical *ethnic* differentiated from the Swedish elite and its Russian masters, formed a potential popular base for the reconstructions of nationalist educator-intellectuals like Lonnrot, Runeberg and Snellman from the 1830s on. Of course, the "Finns" and the "Finland" of their imaginations bore only a very partial resemblance to earlier Finnish society, particularly its pagan era in the later first millennium A.D. This appears to have been the epoch (to judge from its material remains) to which the later *Kalevala* songs and poems collected by Lonnrot in Karelia refer back. Nevertheless, the historicism of Lonnrot and his fellow-intellectuals, with their cults of a golden age of heroes like Vainamoinen and Lemminkainen, answered to a very real need to recover what was thought of as being an ancient but "lost" period of Finnish history and culture. Popularized by the paintings of Gallen-Kallela and the tone-poems and *Kullervo* symphony of Sibelius, this archaic golden age set in Finland's lakes and forests, provided an ideal self-definition and exemplar for the reconstruction of Finnish society and culture as a nation in its struggle against Swedish cultural

and Russian political domination (Boulton Smith 1985; Branch 1985, pp. xi-xxxiv; Honko 1985).

The same patterns operated in other reconstructions from a demotic ethnic base. Historicist revivals of ancient Greek culture and heroes, of ancient Israelite archaeology and heroic exemplars, of ancient Turkish steppe heroes, and of a Nordic pantheon of gods and heroes in a barbarian golden age among Germans, are some examples of nationalist attempts to recreate ethnic pasts that would define and guide modern nations (Barzilai 1959; Kohn 1965; Campbell and Sherrard 1968, pp. 19-49; Kushner 1976).

What they all had in common was their provision of "maps" of ethnic relations and history, and "moralities" of national endeavour. On the one hand, the educator-intellectuals furnished maps of the nature, descent and role of the community in the modern world; on the other hand, exemplary guides to collective action and models of "true" and authentic national behaviour. This is the purificatory and activist moral revolution which a "returning intelligentsia" in search of *its* roots performs and which, for demotic *ethnies*, is a prerequisite for constructing a civic nation.

Intellectuals and professionals, of course, also play a role in the transformation of lateral *ethnies*. Yet here their task is secondary. The bureaucratic state and its incorporating activities provide the framework and the motor of change. Among subordinate, demotic *ethnies*, the state is a target and a culturally alien one. It falls, therefore, to a returning intelligentsia to turn elements of an existing culture into a national grid and moral exemplar, if the civic nation is to be formed and its members mobilized for "nation-building." In the creation of a "community of history and destiny," the historicism of the educator-intellectuals provides the nation-to-be with its genealogy and purpose (Gella 1976; Smith 1986a, pp. 174-208).

I have concentrated on the role of historicist intelligentsia in creating nations from, and around, demotic *ethnies*. Such nations form a majority of all nations and aspirant nations today. Modern circumstances have encouraged vertical *ethnies* to proliferate, and their intelligentsia to put forward claims to national status, while at the same time eliminating "lateral" aristocratic *ethnies*, unless they could transform themselves through an incorporating bureaucratic state into a civic nation. This in turn means that intellectuals and professionals have assumed a disproportionate role in contemporary politics outside the West, often with fervently nationalistic outlooks and policies. This is true even where intelligentsias attempt to stem the tide of ethno-national claims and separatism, by attempting to use a Western-style bureaucratic state to incorporate competing *ethnies*, as in many sub-Saharan African states. They, too, must try to rediscover an ethnic past, but this time for a series of *ethnies* forcibly brought together by the colonial state. African practice suggests a combination of the two routes to nationhood, with one starting out from a lateral *ethnie* (especially if there is a dominant *ethnie* in the state) and operating through bureaucratic incorporation, the other from a vertical *ethnie* (often a core one) and reconstructing an ethno-national culture through the activities of educator-intellectuals like Senghor and Cheikh Anta Diop (Ajayi

1960; Geiss 1974). How successful such a combination is likely to prove remains to be seen (Smith 1983b, pp. 122-35).

## "CULTURAL WARS"

In delineating the two main bases and routes of nation-formation, I have said nothing about the factors that determine which of the rival population-units are likely to achieve nationhood—except that they are most likely to stem from a pre-existing ethnic core. Yet, quite evidently, not all units that possess ethnic cores become nations in the sense of that term used here. There have been plenty of examples of ethnic cores that failed to move towards nationhood, like the Copts and Shan, the Sorbs and Frisians. This is not simply a matter of gaining independence or sovereign states of their own, though it may indicate a failure in the face of *force majeure*. More important is the inability to develop the cultural framework that can unite the chosen population-unit, and hence the political will and activism to resist encroachment and absorption by more powerful neighbours. This is where the relationship between conflict and cultural resources is crucial (Smith 1981b; Brass 1985).

Just as warfare acts as the agent of state-maintenance or state-extinction, so cultural conflict—for *ethnies* that lack states of their own—selects out potential nations from those destined to remain in various degrees of accommodation at the margins of other national societies. Clearly, in this competition the "strength" or "weakness" of the ethnic base itself is all-important. The "fuller," and more richly documented, the historical culture which a population-unit can claim, the better its chances of achieving political recognition and moving towards the status of a civic nation. Equally important, however, is the emergence of a relatively secularized intelligentsia, secular enough to promote auto-emancipation and political activism as a communal option. This in turn requires a cultural war with rival cultures, of the kind waged by German nationalists against French culture or Indian nationalists against British culture. However, it also entails an internal conflict of "sons against fathers," of the secular intelligentsia against the guardians of tradition, in the interests of moving a demotic *ethnie* along the road to nationhood. That may mean a judicious borrowing from external cultures, preferably distant ones, such as the Japanese under the Meiji Restoration utilized and assimilated to indigenous norms. Yet over-borrowing may undermine the strength of native traditions and attenuate an ethnic heritage. So a balance must be struck between archaism and syncretism, which is a function of culture conflict and cultural resources. Such balances and conflicts also place a premium on the control of the means of communication and socialization. The Meiji regime could sanction large-scale borrowings, not only because the foundations of a unique historical Japanese culture were so secure, but also because they controlled the means of communication and socialization (Kosaka 1959; Dore 1964; Mazrui 1985).

The ability to wage "cultural wars" by rejection or selective assimilation is, of course, a function of indigenous cultural resources and their availability for political ends in the hands of the intelligentsia. That is why the main battle of the nationalists is so often fought out within its chosen *ethnic* against the older self-definitions. However, we can only understand the significance of such internal struggles if we take the culture and history of the ethnic core seriously. This leads us back to our initial theses.<sup>11</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

Whatever the factors that make one bid for nationhood successful and another less so (and chance, too, plays a part here), the fundamental preconditions remain as before.

1. The nation, as we have defined it, is a modern phenomenon, and its civic features can only reach full flowering in the modern era, with its specific modes of domination, production and communication. At the same time, modern nations have their roots in pre-modern eras and pre-modern cultures. The origins of such nations must therefore be traced far back, since their ethnic features, though subject to considerable reconstructions, stem from often distant eras and ancient traditions. Modern nations are closely, if often indirectly, related to older, long-lived *ethnies*, which furnish the nation with much of its distinctive mythology, symbolism and culture, including its association with an ancient homeland. It is difficult to see a modern nation maintaining itself as a distinctive identity without such mythology, symbolism and culture. If it does not have them, it must appropriate them, or risk dissolution (Smith 1986b).

2. As we have seen, the nation that emerges in the modern era must be regarded as both construct and real process, and that in a dual sense. For the analyst, a "nation" represents an ideal-type combining elements in accentuated form, but equally needs to be broken down into the constituent dimensions of process to which the construct refers. For the nationalist, too, the nation represents an ideal to be striven for and reconstructed, particularly in the case of demotic *ethnies*, where educator-intellectuals' visions assume great importance. Equally, these visions must elicit a definite *praxis* in the context of real transformations that develop in partial independence of human design and nationalist action, transformations like increasing territorialization and economic unification, the rise of mobilized masses and more scientific communication systems. These transformations also force the cultural and political spheres more closely together, so that the emergent nation becomes both a cultural and a political community. Not surprisingly, their coincidence in time and space becomes one of the chief goals of nationalists everywhere (Gellner 1983, pp. 1-7).

3. The point of departure for any analysis of the modern cultural and political communities we call "nations" lies in the different kinds of pre-modern ethnic communities, the aristocratic lateral and the demotic vertical types. These form the main bases and "ethnic cores" from which the two main routes in the transition to nationhood set out. We can go further. Different types of ethnic base



largely determine the forms and mechanisms through which the nation is subsequently formed, in so far as this is achieved. Not only do they influence the role of the state, they also differentiate the social groups—aristocrats, bureaucrats, bourgeoisies, intelligentsia, lower clergy—that are likely to play leading roles in the movement towards nationhood. Even more important, they influence the forms and much of the content of the ensuing national culture, since it is from their myths of descent and the symbols, memories and values of different types of *ethnie*, that the modern mass culture of each nation and its modes of communication and socialization derive their distinctive identity and forms. That is why, in the fields of culture and socialization, there is greater continuity with the past of each *ethnie* than in such rapidly changing domains as science, technology and economics.<sup>12</sup>

4. In the case of nations formed on the basis of lateral *ethnies*, the influence of the state and its bureaucratic personnel is paramount. It is the culture of an aristocratic *ethnie* that an incorporating bureaucratic state purveys down the social scale and into the countryside and inner-city areas, displacing the hold of ecclesiastical authorities and local nobles (or using them for state ends). This is very much the route followed by those Western societies, in which cultural homogenization around an upper-stratum ethnic core proceeded *pari passu* with administrative incorporation.

In the case of nations formed on the basis of vertical *ethnies*, a returning intelligentsia with its ethnic historicism, provides the motor force and framework of an absent (because culturally alien) bureaucratic state. In this case, there is a more direct confrontation with the guardians of tradition. Often interwoven with a conflict of generations, the struggle of the intelligentsia is for the cultural resources of the community and their utilization for geo-cultural purposes, i.e. for their territorial and political expansion against rival geo-cultural centres. To these ends, the communal culture must be redefined and reconstituted through a national and civic appropriation of ethnic history, which will mobilize members on the basis of a rediscovered identity (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Lowenthal 1985).

5. Finally, the continuity that such reconstructions encourage between many nations and their ethnic pasts, despite real transformations, implies a deeper need transcending individuals, generations and classes, a need for collective immortality through posterity, that will relativize and diminish the oblivion and futility of death. Through a community of history and destiny, memories may be kept alive and actions retain their glory. For only in the chain of generations of those who share an historic and quasi-familial bond, can individuals hope to achieve a sense of immortality in eras of purely terrestrial horizons. In this sense, the formation of nations and the rise of ethnic nationalisms appears more like the institutionalization of a "surrogate religion" than a political ideology, and therefore far more durable and potent than we may care to admit.

For we have to concede that, in the last analysis, there remain "non-rational" elements of explosive power and tenacity in the structure of nations and the outlook and myth of nationalism. These elements, I would contend, stem from the profound historical roots of the myths, symbols, memories and values that define the ethnic substratum of many modern nations. These are elements that

many of us, including many social scientists, would prefer to ignore, but we do so at our peril. The conflicts that embitter the geo-politics of our planet often betray deeper roots than a clash of economic interests and political calculations would suggest, and many of these conflicts, and perhaps the most bitter and protracted, stem from just these underlying non-rational elements. Their persistence, and intensification, in the modern era suggest a long future for ethno-nationalism, and an increasingly violent one, if we fail to address the real issues in the formation of nations and the spread of nationalism.

## NOTES

1. Further discussions of the subjective and objective features of nations, and of their dynamic and processual character, can be found in Rustow (1967) and Nettl and Robertson (1968).

2. For a general discussion, and an example from ancient Rome, see Tudor (1972).

3. For discussions of ancient empires and their economies, see Larsen (1979, especially the essays by Lattimore, Ekholm and Friedman, and Postgate).

4. The ancient Greek term *ethnos*, like the Latin *natio*, has a connotation of common origin, and so, being alike and acting together; but the emphasis is cultural rather than biological. As always, it is what people believe, rather than objective origins, that is important.

5. In many cases, the evidence from ancient and medieval records does not allow us to infer much about the degree of social penetration of elite culture and the range of ethnic ties, as the other essays in the volume by Wiseman (1973) make clear.

6. Of course, this conclusion owes much to the definition of the nation adopted here. Even so, one would have to distinguish in some way(s) between the types of cultural community in antiquity and the Middle Ages, and the very different kinds prevalent in the modern world. It is therefore better to make the distinctions explicit in the definitions themselves. Though there is a "before-and-after" model inherent in this conception, the argument advanced here suggests that the earlier components are *not* simply replaced by the later, modern ones; ethnic components do (and must) persist, if a nation is to be formed.

7. Again, the continuity is cultural, and indirect. It remained significant into the nineteenth century to claim descent from "Franks" and even "Gauls" for political purposes; the recovery of medieval French art and history also spurred this sense of ethnic identification. By the later Middle Ages, the claim to Frankish descent could hardly be substantiated; but again, it is claims within a cultural framework that count.

8. These are discussed by Smith (1986a, pp. 47-68); and see Armstrong (1982).

9. It is necessary to distinguish the educator-intellectuals proper from the wider stratum of the professional intelligentsia, on which see Gouldner (1979) and Smith (1981a, pp. 87-107).

10. For different readings of "manipulation" and "mass ethnic response" in Muslim India, see the essays by Brass and Robinson in Taylor and Yapp (1979).

11. That is why some recent devaluations of the role of "culture" in ethnic identification, particularly among anthropologists, seem beside the point. Of course, cultures change, and at the individual level change contextually, making ethnicity often "situational"; but at the collective level, and over the long term, cultural *forms* are relatively durable. Provided they are encoded in myths, symbols, traditions, artefacts and the like, they provide a delineated framework and repertoire for future generations, which influence



in often subtle ways the perceptions and attitudes of the majority of members of an *ethnie*; cf. the discussion of Armstrong and Gellner in Smith (1984b).

12. This vitally affects the issue of industrial "convergence" between societies of very different culture. It is in the ethnic heritage of different societies, above all, that divergences persist and spill over into the ideological and political spheres (cf. Goldthorpe [1964] for an early statement).

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## Etienne Balibar

Author of works on Marx and Marxism, Spinoza, and Foucault, Etienne Balibar has taught philosophy at the University of Paris and at Nanterre. He wrote *Reading Capital* (London: New Left Books, 1967), with the French Marxist theorist Louis Althusser and *Race, Nation: Class: Ambiguous Identities* (Paris: Editions la Decouverte, 1988) with Immanuel Wallerstein. This latter book marked a transition in Balibar's work toward a deep concern with race and nation, themes he developed in *Masses, Classes, Ideas: Studies on Politics and Philosophy before and after Marx* (London: Verso, 1994).

Always interested in situating philosophical developments in social and political contexts, Balibar has been concerned with the specificity of contemporary racism and its relationship both to class division within capitalism and to the contradictions of the nation-state. Moving from a structuralist reading of modes of production toward a greater engagement with the politics and discourses of social formation, Balibar explores the tension between universalisms and particularisms, between attempts to create universalistic ideological constructions that harmonize the exploiter and the exploited and the always present pull of particular forms of domination, whether on the basis of class, sex, or race.

The nation form involves a historical narrative in which the nation is the subject moving continuously through time, fulfilling a project over many centuries of coming to self-awareness. This destiny of the nation is made possible by pre-national developments, like the ancient generation of linguistic, cultural, and religious communities, that produce a kind of "fictive ethnicity" that then gives content and substance to the nation form. "No modern nation possesses a given 'ethnic' basis, even when it arises out of a national independence struggle." Balibar's argument is a potent challenge to the essentializing nationalisms and racisms that promote an ethnic or racial origin for the nation and is quite congenial to Benedict Anderson's idea of an "imagined community." Balibar declares that "every social community reproduced by the functioning of institutions is imaginary," and that "in certain conditions, only imaginary communities are real."