Nation: ‘Imagined community’ (Anderson, 1983: Note, this is a very sketchy summary of the first three chapters and the introduction of the book):

Features:

* obsessed with blood, death and immortality
* Strong affinity with religious imaginings
* Objectively modern, but subjectively primordial
* Politically very strong but philosophically impoverished
* Emerges with the decline of great religious belief systems and kingship
* Coeval with scientific revolution, secularism, science of government, democracy, capitalism

How is nation different from other imagined communities?

* The great imagined communities of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, etc: fundamental figure/text/silent sign systems unified them across territories with numerous internal fissures.
* Nation as an imagined community thrives on simultaneity enabled by two great inventions of the past centuries: A) Print, B) Clock-time.

Two major inventions that enabled the formation of nations as imagined communities: A) Print capitalism, B) Apprehension of linear abstract time

Print: brought about long-term changes in languages.

Some facts:

Unification of local dialects into regionally understandable powerful vernaculars. Circulation of printed texts had this effect. It began to standardise languages below Latin and above numerous local dialects.

Erosion of Latin as the language of religion and philosophy: Protestant revolution, Luther, new communicative channels, decline of the Church hegemony over communicative channels:

Facts:

1. 77 percent of books printed before 1500 were still in Latin.
2. In the two decades 1520-1540, three times as many books were published in German as in the period 1500-1520. Luther’s works constituted one-third of this list. He was the first bestselling author in human history.
3. Signs of erosion was clear but uneven in 17th and 18th centuries: Hobbes (1588-1678): Latin, Shakespeare (1564-1616): English, Descartes (1596-1650): Latin, Pascal (1623-1662): Latin, Voltaire (1694-1778): French. After 1640, the erosion of Latin was clearly visible.
4. Emergence of English language: North-Western periphery of the Great Latin world.

1. Anglo-Saxon was the privileged language of the court, literature and administration.

2. After the conquest in 1066, for a century and a half, most of royal documents came up in Latin.

3. Between about 1200-1350, this state-Latin was suspended by Norman French.

4. A slow boil took place between the language of the foreign ruling-class and the Anglo-Saxon (people’s language) that produced the early English.

5. After 1362, the new language becomes the language of the court.

Difference between state language and national language. Much of these developments were long-term, unselfconscious, pragmatic and often geographically uneven and haphazard. There was no idea of systematically imposing one language evenly within the heterogenous subject population of a realm.

Apprehension of Time:

This is taken selectively from E.P. Thompson (1967: Note, I’m not using quotation mark)

As the seventeenth century moves on the image of clock-work extends, until, with Newton, it has engrossed the universe. And by the middle of the eighteenth century (if we are to trust Sterne) the clock had penetrated to more intimate levels.

Evans-Pritchard has analysed the time-sense of the Nuer (Nile valley): ‘The daily timepiece is the cattle clock, the round of pastoral tasks, and the time of day and the passage of time through a day are to a Nuer primarily the succession of these tasks and their relation to one another’.

Among the Nandi (east African tribe) an occupational definition of time evolved covering not only each hour, but half hours of the day - at 5-30 in the morning the oxen have gone to the grazing-ground, at 6 the sheep have been unfastened, at 6-30 the sun has grown, at 7 it has become warm, at 7-30 the goats have gone to the grazing-ground, etc. - an uncommonly well-regulated economy. In a similar way terms evolve for the measurement of time intervals. In Madagascar time might be measured by "a rice-cooking" (about half an hour) or "the frying of a locust" (a moment). The Cross-River (Nigeria-Cameroon border) natives were reported as saying "the man died in less than the time in which maize is not yet completely roasted" (less than fifteen minutes).

In Burma in recent times monks rose at daybreak "when there is light enough to see the veins in the hand".

Some major differences between pre-clock reckoning of time and post-clock apprehension of time:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Task Orientation | Time Orientation |
| The organization of time according to the necessity of performing particular tasks with comparatively less attention paid to time in labour: ‘The day’s task seems to disclose themselves by the logic of need’ says Thompson. Here, the nature of task determines time>> *time is task dependent* | Work organized by regular, coordinated, synchronized time discipline, the arrival of strict routine, registry books and attendance sheets>>*task becomes time-bound*…routines, deadlines and so on> “universalization of temporality as a measure of activity”. |
| Natural, concrete, heterogeneous, irregular, leisurely, humanly comprehensible time connected more with the location of the sun and the moon, harvest cycles, reproductive cycles | Unnatural, abstract, tyrannical, internalized, induced to human mind by a set of analogical institutional practices |
| Production for use: According to the Marxist tradition, use value (remember the diagram I drew in my second class?)[[1]](#footnote-1) is measured as ‘a function of the quantity and quality of what is objectified by concrete labour’. Hence, use value contains diverse, heterogeneous and concrete times>time is the function of events and not independent, and can be designated as good or bad | Production for exchange: Exchange value is connected to the emergence of the abstract time which involves the regularization of productivity of the labour according to a new standardized labour time (clock-time). |
| Time passed | Time is currency, moralized and monetized. It is spent |
| A task would generally follow a period of less intense work until another cycle of intense work starts dictated by the rhythms of nature | Tools of time discipline: division of labour, supervision, fines and incentives, bells and clocks. |

Note:

The readings are attached. Both are optional readings. However, if you are interested, read the introduction and the first three chapters of Anderson.

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)