The Making of the Chinese State

In this innovative and well-crafted study of the relationships between the state and its borderlands, Leo Shin traces the roots of China's modern ethnic configurations to the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). Challenging the traditional view that China's expansion was primarily an exercise of incorporation and assimilation, Shin argues that as the center extended its reach to the wild and inhospitable south, the political interests of the state, the economic needs of the settlers, and the imaginations of the cultural elites all facilitated the demarcation and categorization of the borderland "non-Chinese" populations. The story told here, however, extends beyond the imperial period. Just as Ming emperors considered it essential to reinforce a sense of universal order by demarcating the "non-Chinese," modern-day Chinese rulers also find it critical to maintain the myth of a unitary multi-national state by officially recognizing a total of fifty-six "nationalities."

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Ethnicity and Expansion on the Ming Borderlands

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For my mother and father

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Preface

Identities are made, not born. Although I claim no originality for this insight, it is striking how much our understanding of the world has continued to be anchored on the premise that identities – in particular racial, ethnic, and national – are self-evident. In the context of China, not only do we often learn from textbooks and popular media that the country has had a continuous history of over five thousand years (a "fact" that has been used to show that China is either steady or stodgy), we are also constantly reminded by official propaganda and well-intentioned observers alike that the Chinese nation (*Zhonghua min zu*), internally diverse as it might be, is ultimately united by blood as the descendant of the Yellow Emperor. Although the optimistic scholar might view such efforts to promote an essential Chinese identity as so transparent as to be unworthy of intervention, it remains the case that, despite all the harms that have been done in the name of racial, ethnic, or national unity, we who live in the new millennium are still very much, in the broadest sense of the term, prisoners of modernist identities.

To claim that identities are constructed is not to deny that they could be deeply meaningful. Rather, it is to insist that, in order to capture more fully the complexity of the human past, we must approach the formation of identities not as an aside but as an essential component in historical inquiries. For many, the history of China is, at its core, a history of the realization of the Chinese people as a nation. But while the conventional story of the emergence of China as a modern nation-state is in many ways seductive, it is also fundamentally flawed because it takes for granted that "Chinese people" are *inherently* a nation and that "China" is *inherently* a nation-state. I do not share the optimism that we can actually "rescue history from the nation" or that we can now write a history of China, however "China-centered" it is meant to be, that is completely outside the influence of the modern nationalist discourse. What I believe we can do is to imagine alternative narratives, to take not for granted the "Chineseness" of China, and to ask, as some have begun to, "how China became Chinese."

This book has been long in the making. It has taken more time than I anticipated because the sources I discovered along the way have led me to tell a story that is fundamentally different from the one I had in mind. It is with great pleasure then that I am finally able to formally acknowledge with much gratitude teachers, colleagues, friends, and family members who have sustained me through the years.

At Princeton, where this book first took shape as a dissertation, Professors Yü Ying-shih, Willard Peterson, and Susan Naquin set for me not only a high standard for scholarship but also in their own ways examples of how to be an engaged scholar. The late Professor Frederick Mote first opened up for me the world of Chinese history when I was still a wide-eyed undergraduate student. For helping me find my way, I am forever grateful. Professor Denis Twitchett has been a constant source of inspiration and support since my first day as a graduate student. For his sage guidance, I am most thankful. Others at Princeton were supportive in different ways: Yuan Nai-ying and Tang Hai-tao *lao shi* taught me more than they perhaps realize; Martin Heijdra, fellow Ming historian and Chinese bibliographer of the East Asian (formerly Gest) Library, is a walking encyclopedia; Hue Su, the graduate secretary, offered much-needed encouragement; and fellow students helped make graduate school an intellectually exciting experience.

Beyond Princeton, I have also benefited from the kindness and generosity of friends and colleagues. I cannot hope to repay them all, but let me at least acknowledge the following: Lin Fu-shih, of Academia Sinica in Taiwan, helped arrange my visit to the Fu Ssu-nien Library; Fan Honggui and Wu Guofu, both of Guangxi University for Nationalities, welcomed me to Nanning and arranged for me to visit Tianyang (where the native domain of Tianzhou was); Tonami Mamoru and Sugiyama Masaaki facilitated my visits to the justly famous library collection at the Institute for Research in Humanities at Kyoto University; Dorothy Ko introduced me to useful materials early in the project; Robert Marks kindly shared with me his data on Guangxi and his enthusiasm for maps; Daniel Bryant sacrificed his research time in Taipei to photocopy for me sections of a hard-to-find local gazetteer; Tsukada Shigeyuki of the National Museum of Ethnology at Osaka and Taniguchi Fusao of Toyo University, from both of whose scholarship I have drawn much inspiration, kindly sent me copies of their important publications; Pamela Crossley, Helen Siu, and Donald Sutton not only invited me to a conference in which some of the arguments of this book were presented but also allowed me to read in advance the introduction to their conference volume; Michael Tsin read part of the manuscript on short notice; colleagues in the departments

of History and Asian Studies at the University of British Columbia have been most supportive.

On more practical matters, funding for the initial research for this book was provided by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation and the China Times Cultural Foundation. A Mellon Fellowship from the Society of Fellows in the Humanities at Columbia University allowed time to draft the first of many versions of this book. In helping turn the manuscript into a book, Marigold Acland, Alison Powell, and Ken Karpinski have been most patient. Eric Leinberger drew the maps, and Paul Buell drafted the index.

Over the years, family members have provided crucial moral and material support. Although words are never enough, I want to thank my parents, sisters, and parents-in-law for offering nourishments and places to rest whenever I needed them, and I want to express my sincere appreciation for my wife, Stephanie Chang, for sharing the joy and grief of this project from start to finish. Nathan is right that this book has taken much time away from playing, but I hope the words here will one day help answer questions he has not begun to ask.

Finally, I acknowledge with great sadness that the late Professor Mote will not be able to see the fruit of the seed he sowed some twenty years ago in the classrooms in Jones Hall. He would have been my most trenchant and yet gentle critic.

Dynastic and reign periods

Shang	ca. 1700–ca. 1100 BCE
Zhou	ca. 1100–256
Qin	221–206
Han	206 BCE–220 CE
Three Kingdoms	220–280
Jin	265–420
Northern and Southern Dynasties	317–589
Sui	581–618
Tang	618–907
Five Dynasties	907–960
Song	960–1276
Yuan	1271–1368
Ming	1368–1644
Hongwu	1368–1398
Jianwen	1399–1402
Yongle	1403–1424
Hongxi	1425
Xuande	1426–1435
Zhengtong	1436–1449
Jingtai	1450–1456
Tianshun	1457–1464
Chenghua	1465–1487
Hongzhi	1488–1505
Zhengde	1506–1521
Jiajing	1522–1566
Longqing	1567–1572
Wanli	1573–1620
Taichang	1620
Tianqi	1621–1627
Chongzhen	1628–1644
Qing	1636–1912
Republican China	1912–1949
People's Republic of China	1949–

Conventions

With a number of exceptions, I have transliterated Chinese names and terms using the *pin yin* system, especially according to the guidelines established by the Library of Congress. Although the results might appear unfamiliar, the practice of transliterating each Chinese character separately does have the benefit of compelling us to reexamine many of the key terms in the Chinese discourses on boundaries and identities. For translating Chinese official titles and for understanding the functions of the myriad government offices, I have found Charles Hucker's *Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* indispensable.

To convert Chinese dates into their Western equivalents, I have relied on Keith Hazelton's *Synchronic Chinese–Western Daily Calendar, 1341–1661* A.D. In cases when only the year of an emperor's reign is mentioned in the source, I have followed the convention of rendering the lunar year to its closest Western counterpart. Hence, the tenth year of the reign of the Chenghua emperor, which lasted from 18 January 1474 to 5 February 1475, would be referred to in the text simply as 1474.

In preparing for the maps of Guangxi, I have made extensive use of volume 7 of the monumental *Historical Atlas of China* (*Zhongguo li shi di tu ji*) edited by the late Professor Tan Qixiang of Fudan University. To help the reader to locate a particular area mentioned in the study, I have, whenever necessary, indicated in parentheses the larger administrative unit of which the area was a part. Hence, "Quan Zhou (Guilin)" is shorthand for "Quan Zhou was located in Guilin prefecture."

In citing multi-chapter (*juan*) Chinese sources, I have in general followed the practice of placing a colon between the *juan* number and the page range. But if a modern edition of an early Chinese source is cited, I would in most instances replace the colon with a period. In such cases, the page range referred to is that of the pagination of the modern edition.

Abbreviations

Cangwu	Ying Jia et al., *Cangwu zong du jun men zhi*
DMB	Goodrich and Fang, *Dictionary of Ming Biography*
DYYZ	Yang Fang et al., *Dian Yue yao zuan*
GXTZ (1531)	Huang Zuo et al., *Guangxi tong zhi*
GXTZ (1599)	Su Jun, *Guangxi tong zhi*
GXTZ (1733)	Jin Hong et al., *Guangxi tong zhi*
jr.	*ju ren* (provincial graduate)
js.	*jin shi* (metropolitan graduate)
MHD	Shen Shixing et al., *Ming hui dian*
MS	Zhang Tingyu et al., *Ming shi*
MSL	*Ming shi lu*
pref.	prefaced
YJJW	Tian Rucheng, *Yan jiao ji wen*
YXCZ	Wang Sen, *Yue xi cong zai*
YXWZ	Wang Sen, *Yue xi wen zai*