

Critical Han Studies

*The History, Representation,
and Identity of China's Majority*

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8. *Hushuo*

The Northern Other and the Naming of the Han Chinese

Mark Elliott

Historians face a challenge in trying to understand the recurrent unity of *Zhongguo*, or of what in English we call “China.” When compared with the failure of other antique empires to maintain their existence into the modern age, the longevity of the Chinese state seems to be something of an anomaly. For this very reason, it demands our attention; indeed, it is the basis for that oft-asked question, How is it that China lasted when Greece and Rome (or Egypt, or Parthia) did not? One may be inclined to frame a response in terms of the enduring qualities or customs believed to define the *Hua*—a kind of cultural core of “Chineseness”—and the close connection seen to obtain between it, a geographic core (what is often called “China proper” or in older Chinese documents *neidi*, the “inner lands”), and a demographic core made up of the people who have historically inhabited China proper, that is, the group typically referred to as *Han*. But this response raises further uncertainties as to these various core notions: What set of beliefs, values, or practices makes Chinese culture “Chinese”? Where precisely do its geographic sources lie? And who, exactly, are the Han?

As part of the effort made in this volume to develop a critical approach to the study of the Han, this chapter seeks to address the last of these questions: Whom or what are we talking about when we talk about some group of people identified, whether by ourselves, by others, or by themselves, as “Han”—that is, Hanren, Hanzu, or Han minzu? The challenge is greater than it might at first seem. For as will become apparent, the historical usage of the term *Han* is highly unstable, and even in the contemporary world the term can be slippery. Sometimes it is used synonymously with “Chinese,” sometimes not; people who might be considered Han in some contexts might not be in others—they might call themselves

Tangren, for instance, as is very common among Cantonese speakers still today; and there is a long and lively debate over who the “true” Han people are and where they came from. In short, it is hard to escape the conclusion that *Han* is just one of many untidy terms that encumber the world we live in.

The goal of this chapter, therefore, is not to answer the question, Who are the Han? but to ask, Why is *Han* used to talk about the people we know as the Chinese? In other words, how has *Han* acquired the sense of an ethnic identifier? What does this category mean today, and what has it meant in the past? What can we learn about the Han, or, more precisely, about *Han* as a classificatory imperative, by understanding its origins and evolution? To address the above questions, I offer a preliminary investigation of the history of the term *Han* and how it came to be applied to the Chinese, that is, to the people of the Central Plains. This is not to say that the matter of the actual origins of the Han people themselves—as represented by the question, “Who are the people who now make up the majority population of China?”¹—is not an important one. But it would seem that this is a problem more for geneticists than for historians. We are already getting parts of the answer, and more will come as new techniques involving DNA analysis become more widespread.² Instead, for historian and anthropologist alike, a critical approach to *Han* means investigating the complicated processes of definition, discrimination, and identification—as well as, crucially, the discourse on these processes—all the different things people do as part of forming into larger, more or less discrete entities we now call ethnic groups. Assuming, that is, we agree that the Han constitute an ethnic group—a problem to which I shall shortly return.

This chapter offers two main conclusions. First, the development of *Han* as an ethnonym owed greatly to the intervention of the Hu, the nomadic and seminomadic peoples living to the north of the Central Plains. I propose that just as the name *Hu* was an invention of the people of the Central Plains, so the name “Han”—that is, a label for people who, by descent, language, and cultural practice, were recognized as Central Plains dwellers (or their descendants)—was largely the invention of the people of the steppe. In short, *Han* was a Hu proposition—hence my title. Second, I would suggest that the ethnic unity of the Chinese as seen in the adoption of *Han* to describe themselves is really more the *product* of repeated efforts to create and foster political unity than it is the *source* of that unity. For while *Han* as an ethnic term can be dated at least as far back as the sixth century C.E., its meaning and usage varied greatly over the succeeding millennium, stabilizing only in the fifteenth century or so, after the founding of the

Ming dynasty. In the interim, *Han* was applied to all kinds of people, some of whom we would regard as “Chinese” and others decidedly not. In other words, the notion of a durable, unified conception of the Han people as a people dating back millennia is largely a myth; for much of Chinese history, divisions of various sorts—both those between Chinese and non-Chinese and those between northerners and southerners—prevented such an idea from taking hold.

ON “ETHNICITY”

Before going further, it is worth saying something about terms and concepts. This would seem to be a necessary step if we wish to avoid accepting existing labels or classification schemes as in any way given or obvious. We must remember to ask why *this* term and not *that*, and at the same time move beyond mere words to understand not just what is being described but why it is being described in a particular way at a particular time and by whom. We are obliged, moreover, to exercise a certain reflexivity in questioning our own ability to pose questions objectively, given the limitations placed upon us by the time and place framing our own inquiry.

The principal term that demands our attention is *ethnic*. It is sometimes claimed that the Han is “the largest ethnic group on earth.” Is this true? Not, but is it an ethnic group at all? The answer to this question will depend greatly on what one means by “ethnic group” and how one understands ethnicity and other kinds of processes of identity formation. Whole books have been written on this subject, which is obviously far too complicated to fully treat here. Though I do not expect universal agreement with my position, let me summarize my own views in an attempt to offer at least a working definition of the term and to raise some issues for consideration.³ I have elsewhere defined ethnicity as “the social organization and political assertion of difference perceived to inhere in culturally bounded, descent-based categories.”⁴ This short definition might be amplified by the observation that ethnic categories are understood by the scholar as historical constructions, which arise in particular contexts and change as those contexts change. This is as much to say that though ethnic phenomena are found in many places in the human historical record, including in the pre-modern era and even antiquity,⁵ individual ethnic formations themselves do not in fact constitute unchanging and archaic social facts, despite assertions of the antique, even primordial, qualities of one or another ethnic group of the sort that people frequently make.

Two other important points that are fundamental to this interpretation

of ethnicity are, first, that, as a highly elaborated expression of social difference, ethnicity requires not just the assertion of difference but also its recognition by others; and second, to be “ethnic,” a group must lay down certain expectations of its members in terms of action, expectations that are not applied to those outside the group (and may even be forbidden to them). Ethnicity is, in other words, transactional and exclusive in nature: it depends on the delineation and maintenance of boundaries, and the mutual acknowledgment that such boundaries exist, whether or not they are in fact respected; it depends, too, on the creation and continuation of certain practices and institutions, and on the broad, though not necessarily universal, recognition that such practices and institutions belong to, and define, that group and no other—whether this is in fact true, again, being largely irrelevant. This is not to say that people do not move in and out of ethnic groups, whether temporarily or for their whole lives. Of course, this happens all the time. But doing so involves costs—losses as well as gains (and in this double sense is also “transactional”)—and is subject to the same conditions of recognition and delineation.

The above approach to ethnicity, as both subject of analysis and as critical concept, is echoed in a wide range of works by anthropologists⁶ and has gained wide currency among historians, to judge from the increasing frequency of its use in book and article titles.⁷ The problem of identity formation in the Ming and Qing periods is prominently featured, for instance, in many of the essays in *Empire at the Margins*, including, notably, the introduction, where it is observed that ethnicity “is relative in the deepest sense,” “ephemeral,” “constructed,” and may either be “imposed by state machineries or asserted by local populations . . . to mark boundaries and to highlight differences,” all phrases one is likely to encounter in the broader literature.⁸ This trend appears to suggest a movement away from earlier formulations, in which ethnicity was understood specifically as a modern phenomenon, too problematic to be applied to the era preceding the rise of the nation-state⁹—though even here, as the editors of *Empire at the Margin* caution, “all historians who project ethnic phenomena back to the period before the nineteenth century do so as a matter of interpretation.”¹⁰ One might reasonably extend this caution to any discussion of ethnicity before the 1950s, when the word first enters common discourse.¹¹ But it must be noted that at that time, the meaning of *ethnic* differed from that proposed above, as it tended to be restricted to marginalized groups in society—that is, it was understood sociologically, as a way of speaking of minoritarian status, not anthropologically, as a way of

treating identity discourse generally.¹² If current scholarship is any guide, it is no longer the case that an interest in ethnicity implies an exclusive concern with marginalized or subjugated groups, or just the modern era, however defined.¹³

Yet if one were to search for an explanation as to why Han “ethnicity” has so far eluded careful scholarly examination, this might well be because, as the dominant group, the Han were by definition denied the possibility of being ethnic at all. We find that that this older paradigm prevails still in work by Chinese scholars, where to be “ethnic” is to be a *minzu*, or, more precisely, a *shaoshu minzu*, formerly translated uniformly into English as “minority nationality” and now, in a significant shift that began in 1995, as “ethnic group.”¹⁴ Generally, *minzu* and related terms tend to reflect the older English meaning of “minority-ethnic,” while the newer, constructionist (or circumstantialist) notion of ethnicity is signified by a different word in Chinese, the neologism *zuqun*.¹⁵ This term might be applied even to dominant groups, which, no less than minority groups, also engage in identity-making that can legitimately be regarded as ethnic in nature. The definition I advance is thus not predicated on where a group might be positioned within social, political, or economic hierarchies; that is, one can legitimately speak of Japanese, not just Korean or Ainu, ethnicity in Japan; French, not just Algerian or Vietnamese, ethnicity in France; and so on. Nonetheless, it is perhaps suggestive that, as will become clear below, the group that came to be known as the Han began to acquire this identity in a cumulative process during periods, beginning in the sixth century C.E., when they actually *were* marginalized, at least politically. This is as much to say that even if one did not want to foreclose the possibility that a socially or politically powerful group, such as the Han, might have something that could be called an ethnic identity, one would still need to consider the significance of that group’s relative place in political, economic, or other hierarchies.

In short, ethnicity as defined here acknowledges a link between power and identity; but it is not so simple or straightforward, and rejects any implicit inverse relation between ethnic identity and access to power or prestige. History shows, it seems, that the powerful are as capable of rousing ethnic sentiments among their number in the defense of privilege as the weak are in the protest of it; and that the ruled are as liable to find themselves the objects of ethnic classification schemes conceived by their rulers as the latter are of seeing the terms of their own identity shaped and limited by the governing institutions they purport to control.

WHICH OTHER?

To propose, as above, that ethnicity is created transactionally is to say that it emerges only when there is interaction between two groups. Assuming, for the sake of argument, that the group presently calling itself the Han is no exception to this general rule, the question then arises, Who is (or was) the Other to the Han Self? Seeking an answer to this question must be regarded as an important part of developing a critical approach to the study of the formation of Han identity. We know that the popular idea of a China cut off from the world, hiding behind walls great and small, is an utter myth. China, or what would later become China, has known many Others.¹⁶ Conversely, many Others have known China—or perhaps we should say, “many Chinas,” lest we be suspected of positing an essentialized, unchanging “China” through time. Not being separated by impassable natural barriers, interaction on or near Central States territory between peoples on all sides, living different lifestyles, speaking different languages, and possessing wholly different cultures was an integral part of their lived experience for all of recorded history, and no doubt for much of the period before that, before we can even begin to speak in terms of “China.” Thus the earliest opportunities for ethnic formation are lost in the very distant past, though what little we can glean about this seems to suggest an extended process of amalgamation and acculturation that eventually produced something recognizably “Chinese,” called by various names, most commonly *Hua*.

Among China’s various Others, the most important in terms of understanding the story of Han ethnogenesis have been nomadic pastoralists living north of the Central Plains, in early times known in the Chinese language most familiarly as *Hu*, and by other names as well, such as *Fan*, *Yi*, and *Lu*. As I attempt to show, the initial work to transform *Han* from a political to an ethnic term was done by the *Hu*, and the further development of the term owed much to its use by later *Hu* groups. While the basic trajectory of the story is fairly straightforward—the label *Han* starts out as a political designation and ends up an ethnonym—this development was anything but. In fact, it was quite tortuous, owing in no small part to a deep and irreconcilable division among Chinese elites as to who could become like them (i.e., the *Hua*) and whether such people could legitimately claim, as many did, to hold the Mandate of Heaven. For these reasons, the evolution of the name *Han* is closely intertwined with China’s political and intellectual history, especially concerning issues having to do with defining who and what the “Chinese” and “China” were, and with

the historical relationship between Central States dwellers and the people living to the north, a notoriously ambiguous relationship that became more fraught over time.

To avoid being dismissed as nonsense (in the usual, colloquial, meaning of *hushuo*), the claim that *Han* was a Hu proposition must immediately be qualified by the insistence that the Hu alone could not have accomplished this construction. Two parties were required to pull it off, the Hu and the Hua, that is, the future Han.¹⁷ (I address below the question of why *Han*, not *Hua*, came to be an ethnic categorization, while *Hua* continued to function as a broader ethnocultural category.) *Han* began to be used as a label for Central States people in the fourth century, during the Northern Wei (386–534). Over approximately the next millennium, *Han* evolved into a kind of ethnic supersign, as the interaction between the inhabitants of the Central States and the inhabitants of the territories on its northern borders led to its adoption by the Han themselves. The term was variously employed in the Tang and Song, and used with different meanings again under the Liao, Jin, and Yuan, until by the Ming *Han* had begun to acquire something like its modern meaning, in that it had become a single referent for southern and northern Chinese alike. Even then, however, the term remained somewhat in flux, as is borne out by the creation of the *Hanjin* identity category in the Qing, or the various proposals put forth in the early twentieth century that aimed to define who the Han really were. Ultimately, the process of generating Han can be seen as one that permitted the bridging of the long-standing divide between north and south. In other words, the emergence of the Han as a single ethnic group was not so much the basis for Chinese unity as a consequence of it.

Given the complexity of these various issues and the long time span involved, there is not the space to do more than outline the case. I will therefore focus on the early stages of the process of Han ethnogenesis—understood here in the strict sense of the evolution of the label *Han*—during the Northern Wei and succeeding northern dynasties prior to the establishment of the Sui (581–618), with briefer treatment of the term's changing meanings up to the Ming, when usage appears to have stabilized.

INITIAL MOVES FROM HUA TO HAN

The name *Han*, as is well known, derives from the Han River (Hanshui), which flows from modern Shaanxi through to Hubei, where it joins the Yangzi at Wuhan. It became the name of the state founded by Liu Bang (256? 247?–195 B.C.E.), known after its successful reunification of the old

Qin empire as the Han dynasty, and which, according to conventional dating, lasted from 206 B.C.E. until 220 C.E., with a brief interregnum between 9 and 24 C.E.¹⁸ Not surprisingly, the first historical references to *Hanren* are found during this period, and they are abundant. However, examination of these references makes it quite clear that *Han* was purely a dynastic referent: *Hanren* meant the “people of Han,” the subjects of the Han emperor, with no reference to culture, descent, language, or anything we might understand as indicating ethnic identity. Historians are mostly in agreement on this point: *Han* originated in the Han period but as a political identifier, not an ethnonym. Other words existed that carried a sense of the group’s cultural self-definition—most especially *Zhongguo*, *Hua*, *Zhonghua*, and *Xia* (often used in combination, e.g., *Huaxia*), all of which could be combined with *ren* (person) and which enjoyed high classical associations—but not *Han*.¹⁹ After the fall of the Han in the early third century, then, those terms persisted, while *Hanren* largely fell out of use, replaced instead by *Weiren*, *Jinren*, *Wuren* (people of Wei, etc.). The only people who remained *Hanren* were the subjects of the rump Han state that arose in Sichuan.²⁰ Amid this political flux, the term that perhaps enjoyed the greatest favor as an ethnicized autonym was, it seems, *Hua*.²¹

The revival of the term *Hanren*, and its earliest use with a meaning synonymous with *Huaren* or *Zhongguo ren*, seems to have occurred under the Sārbi (Xianbei) rulers of the state of Wei, known to history as the Northern Wei. As is well known, the ruling clan, the Tabgach (Tuoba), were from the north, outside the Hua ecumene. The Sārbi pastoral economy and daily customs were close to those of the Xiongnu, the old nemesis of the Han, and their language, what we have been able to recover of it, was proto-Turkic, with Mongolic elements.²² In short, the Northern Wei, one of a number of northern regimes, represented the resurgence of Hu power in the Period of Disunity that followed the collapse of the Three Kingdoms—a resurgence commonly and tellingly described in traditional Chinese historiography as “the five Hu disordering China” (*wuhu luanhua*)—a phrase invented by southern writers unhappy with this turn of events.

To meet the challenge of ruling a large part of *Zhongguo* (also called *Zhongtu* or *Zhongyuan*), the historical Hua heartland, the Northern Wei ruler Xiaowen (r. 471–99) adopted a policy of wholesale acculturation, moving the capital south to Luoyang, promoting the wearing of Chinese-style clothing, changing Sārbi names to Chinese names, embracing the literary heritage of the Central Plains, and advocating intermarriage between Chinese and Sārbi.²³ At the same time, some Central Plains dwellers who remained (many families had fled to the south) acculturated the other

direction, wearing Sārbi clothing and embracing military careers rather than depending on noble connections in earning their livelihoods.²⁴ A distinct northern culture arose as a result of this synthesis, characterized, among other things, by the patronage of Buddhism, which was adopted earlier and more universally among Sārbi than among Chinese, even those in the north.²⁵ The result, as more than one scholar has observed, was a kind of “hybrid vigor” that reflected as much the sinicization of the Hu as it manifested what I would propose calling the “borealization” of the Hua.²⁶ Such hybridity is amply attested, for example, in the tomb art of the period, which shows how fluid the boundaries were between “Chinese” and “foreign” styles.²⁷

Under these conditions of confidence and prosperity, Northern Wei emperors conceived the plan of expanding beyond the Central Plain southward, to reconstitute a greater empire and reunify the world, that is, *tianxia*. To do this, however, required considerable political leverage. The chief disadvantage they faced was that, even in the eyes of many of their own subjects—not to mention southerners, for whom the “barbarian” North had taken on the appearance of a cold, forbidding, and distant foreign country, at least to judge from how they wrote about it in their poetry²⁸—the Northern Wei regime remained, despite broad evidence of acculturation, alien and mistrusted. At least some (it is impossible to say how many, especially since we know that many Chinese officials actually took Sārbi surnames)²⁹ leading Northern Wei Chinese elites shared the general attitudes of people such as Jiang Tong and chafed at Sārbi rule, leading to political insecurities on both sides.³⁰ It was in part out of a desire to address these issues—and not owing to an irresistible urge to “become Chinese,” as so much thinking on sinification might suggest—that Xiaowen promulgated his acculturationist policies, which were part of a larger effort to reshape thinking about the empire. The move was based in part on a selective reinterpretation of the classics, whereby the ethnic exclusivism found in such texts as the *Zuozhuan* was downplayed in favor of the sort of cultural universalism prevalent in such texts as the *Mencius*, whereby the possibility is admitted that the Other can become civilized, can become part of Zhongguo, if by their actions they manifest virtue and righteousness.³¹ Hence the Northern Wei adoption of the *Rites of Zhou* should be seen as a consciously archaizing maneuver.³²

A key element of this universalizing program was to find a proper place for the Sārbi in a Chinese world. Beginning with Emperor Xiaowen, Northern Wei rulers employed the terms *Hu* and *Hua* carefully, aiming to stress the pre-Han significations of each term. With respect to *Hua*,

the idea seems to have been to shift its meaning away from the narrower, quasi-ethnic sense it had acquired since the Han back to a more general meaning that included all who lived in the Central Plains and the lands surrounding them. As for *Hu*, this was a term that the Northern Wei scrupulously avoided using to describe itself;³³ from the Sārbi point of view, *Hu* were *other* Others, less civilized and deserving of a lower place in the hierarchy. Their establishment of a “Barbarians’ Hostel” (*siyiguan*) in Luoyang was one sign of this attitude: an acknowledgment of the existence of a difference between *Hua* and *Yi*, and an assertion that they, the Northern Wei, belonged to the world of *Hua*, even if they had not been part of the original Han order.

The fact was that the conquest and permanent occupation of the Central Lands by Northerners in the medieval period greatly complicated any project of imperial restoration, since any such reunification could not be accomplished on the pretext of a restoration of the Han. That world lay in the past: the last attempt, in the early 400s, quickly failed.³⁴ Instead, the reimagining of a Greater Chinese world required a reconceptualization of empire and political legitimacy in the old Han geographic heartland that was not predicated on the old Han order—an epoch-making moment that, distant in the past though it is, may still be recognized as “a vital prelude to the formation of the modern Chinese nation-state.”³⁵ The inspiration for this reconceptualization lay in the pre-Qin corpus of historical commentaries, in which *Hua* remained a culturally defined category. This had obvious appeal to the Tabgach, who “had begun to form a consciousness of *Zhonghua* that was distinct from a worldview that had Han at its center.”³⁶ The success of this enlarged vision of empire required not only resolving the lingering tension between *Hu* and *Hua* but also dissolving the identification between the terms *Hua* (which was meant to apply to all civilized men and women) and *Zhongguo ren* (which applied only to those who originally hailed from the Central Plains and their descendants). Since Sārbi, like *Zhongguo ren*, also wanted to make a claim to belong to the civilized world of the *Hua*, a different word was needed to describe that latter group, the Chinese living under Northern rule: one that differentiated the two, not according to region and not according to their place as either “barbarian” or “civilized” people but according to original descent (real or putative), language, dress, and custom. That word was *Han*.

Though they have not done as much with the information as they might have, historians have known for a very long time that *Han* as a name for the Chinese—that is, a name for *Zhongguo ren*, not a name for the subjects of the Han dynasty—surfaced as early as the sixth century.³⁷ It

appears a number of times in contemporary histories, such as the *Weishu*, *Nanqi shu*, *Beiqi shu*, and the *Beishi*, as in these examples:

The emperor said, "Commander Gao [Ang] wants to use solely Han men, but I am afraid they will not be able to complete the job. We should separate out a thousand or so Sārbi troops to intersperse among them. What do you think?"³⁸

Now if you take me to be your commander, things will be different than before. There will be no maltreatment of Han and no violations of military orders. Decisions of life and death will be left to me. Then I will agree [to be your commander].³⁹

It is apparent here that *Han'er*, "man of Han," means inhabitants of the Central Plains, that is, Chinese. *Hanren* also shows up in a discussion of Buddhism in the *Weishu*:

From now on, if anyone dares to serve the Hu gods by making statues of clay and bronze, they will be executed along with their entire family. Although they are said to be Hu gods, when you ask Hu people today, they say they have no such gods. This [the spread of Buddhism] all owes to those Han scoundrels of former times, Liu Yuanzhen and Lü Boqiang and their followers, who invoked the absurd sayings of those Hu beggars [i.e., Buddhists], embellished by the falsehoods of Laozi and Zhuangzi. None of it is true.⁴⁰

In his study of the emergence of the ethnonym *Han*, Shaoyun Yang has found other evidence to suggest that Northern Wei literati were aware of this meaning of *Han* and that they used it in speaking about their language, that is, as *Hanyu*.⁴¹ Certainly this was the impression held by scholars during the Song dynasty. In *Zizhi tongjian*, Sima Guang refers to the wish of the Northern Wei ruler to remove the crown prince because "he is no longer like us and has taken on the qualities of the Han." In his commentary, Hu Sanxing (1230–1302) explained to the reader, "The Xianbei called the people of the Central Country 'Han.'"⁴²

So it seems that the adoption of *Han* as a term for "the Chinese" was indeed well under way by the mid-sixth century. By virtue of these semantic shifts, *Hua* could also not conveniently be used by northerners to talk about Chinese in the south, so a new word, *Nanren* (Southerner), was introduced around this same time as a means of speaking about them.⁴³ Southerners, on the other hand, continued to refer to themselves freely as *Hua* and to nomads (former nomads, really), as *Yi*; the term *Beiren* (Northerner) also emerged, but as a purely regional referent, applicable to anyone, Chinese or Sārbi.⁴⁴ The long life enjoyed by all these words,

which remained part of the Chinese political vocabulary for centuries, is testament to the fundamental divide between north and south, a divide eventually papered over by *Han*.

The quotation from the *Weishu* cited above, in particular the phrase *qianshi Han ren*, offers a clue as to the transformation of the term *Han*. One possible understanding of this phrase is that it means “a Han person of a former age,” that is, a former Han subject. However, since the figure of Liu Zhenyuan mentioned in the passage is identifiable as a Buddhist monk of the late fourth century, he was clearly not alive during the Han and therefore not a former Han subject. One is therefore led to conclude that *Hanren* here is an ethnic, not a political, label, an attempt by the author to draw attention to the fact that while Buddhism was originally a teaching of the Hu it was propagated by non-Hu followers such as Liu, who were manifestly *Hanren*, that is, Chinese. One imagines that the habit of referring to the Chinese as *Hanren*, “people of the Han,” remained in use in at least some circles and led to the kind of shorthand we see here, where it came to refer to latter-day descendants of former Han subjects who obviously no longer owed any political allegiance to the Han but were connected in other ways (descent, language, residence, custom) with people who had lived under the Han.

As we have few attestations of *Hanren* being used in this way before this time, it is difficult to know among which circles this habit may have been sustained. At a minimum, however, these citations make clear that distinguishing between *Hu* and *Hua*—or, from the point of view of the Northern Wei, distinguishing between *Sārbi* and *Han* within the *Hua* ecumene—was everyday practice. It may have been the continuation of old practice: Just as *Rum* and *Frank* continued to be widely used in the Arab world to refer to regimes of Asia Minor and Europe, respectively, long after the demise of the Roman and Frankish empires, so *Sārbi* people simply carried over the custom of referring to Central States people as *Han*.⁴⁵ They did add a disrespectful twist, it seems, since the term *Han'er* is generally regarded as having carried pejorative connotations.⁴⁶ And after all, ethnic groups often name each other in not very complimentary ways. The terminological evolution we observe in the north in the fifth and sixth centuries is, by this logic, a “natural” outcome of the intensified interaction between peoples who, on both sides, saw themselves as quite different from each other and were poised in distinctly unequal relationships. We can think of *Hu* (or the much more offensive *Lu* or *Yi*) as Chinese names for the Northern Other, while *Han* (or the less complimentary *Han'er*) was the *Sārbi* name for the local Other in the Central Lands. We should also expect that the *Sārbi* had

another name, in the Särbi language, for the Chinese, which name corresponded to *Han*.⁴⁷ Indeed, early on the need to communicate in the Chinese language may well have suggested the need to find a suitable corresponding term, with *Han* emerging as the most obvious choice.

Northern dominance over the centuries, and the switch by elites to exclusive use of the Chinese language, assured the rise of the ethnonym *Han*. But the Northern Wei attempt to reframe the discourse of “civilization” was only partially successful, and they certainly never managed to reunify the world, a task that fell to the Sui and the Tang—not coincidentally, both states that, like the Northern Wei, had strong connections to the world beyond *tianxia*, that is, to the northern steppe. If one can make a judgment on the basis of the use of terms in the dynastic histories, it seems that *Hanren* was not very widely used in the Sui. There are only three occurrences of the word in the *Suishu*, all clearly associated with stories from the Han period; when the meaning was “Chinese,” it seems, *Hua* remained the word of choice.⁴⁸ *Hua* continued in use in the Tang and the Five Dynasties period, but *Hanren* in the meaning of Chinese came to be used with increasing frequency, usually in a pairing with *Fan*.⁴⁹ This same use continued under the Song, when Ma Yongqing, writing in the early twelfth century, could simply remark, “the Yi and Di today call the Chinese ‘Han.’”⁵⁰ Yet the situation was not so simple, and *Han* did not stabilize nearly so quickly. Nor was it universally applied. As in earlier periods, it was at least as common to refer to people as *Tangren* (men of the Tang) or *Songren* (men of the Song) as it was to refer to them as *Hanren*; but when *Hanren* was used, it did not mean “men of the Han.” It meant “Chinese.” The tendency seems to have been to turn to this word when the subject at hand required drawing attention to ethnic or “national” distinctions that otherwise remained unsaid, whether because they were unimportant or because they were obvious.⁵¹ But beginning in the tenth century, *Han* took on new meanings that considerably exceeded those it had acquired up to that time. To some degree, one can characterize this as the unfolding of a bifurcated discourse, whereby on the one hand administrative exigencies prompted the assignation of the label upon new groups, usually politically defined, while on the other hand the memory of the earlier meaning of *Han* for “the Chinese” persisted, especially in popular usage.

HANREN AND NANREN IN THE LIAO, JIN, AND YUAN

The employment of the terms *Han* and *Hanren* in the cismural states (or “conquest dynasties”) of Liao, Jin, and Yuan, is much better known and

more widely studied than it is in preceding periods, in part because historians in the Qing took an interest in the matter beginning in the eighteenth century.⁵² The major reorganization of identity categories occasioned by the dramatic political shifts of the eleventh through thirteenth centuries suggests that there were significant incongruencies with preceding as well as later norms.⁵³ It is important to be mindful of such discrepancies and of the ways in which notions of who was and was not “Chinese” depart from modern expectations. These incongruencies appear particularly obvious in the meanings assigned to *Han* by the Liao, Jin, and Yuan regimes anxious to impose greater legibility over local populations newly brought under their control.

According to one recent scholar, early in the dynasty the Liao began to use *Han'er* to describe ethnic Chinese whether or not they were Liao subjects. Later on they discriminated more carefully, using *Hanren* or *Han'er* only for former Song subjects whom they had captured and brought under their authority.⁵⁴ At this time, it appears that *Han'er*, which was in fairly common use, lacked the negative meaning it had once had; moreover, the word was routinely used by Song officials in their communication with Liao officials to refer to Chinese subjects of the Khitan ruler and by Song writers describing the activities of ethnic Chinese at the Liao court, though *Hanren* is seen, too.⁵⁵ (*Hanren* is much more common in the *Liaoshi* than *Han'er*, the latter being totally absent in the *Songshi*.) As for Song, they regarded the Liao *Han'er* as little better than the Khitan themselves, and often lumped them all together as *Fan* or, less offensively, *Beiren*, “Northerners.”⁵⁶

Thus in the Liao usage of *Han* and its variants there is a perceptible “northward creep,” as the word that was previously applicable to all Song subjects came to be used in a more restricted sense for just those Song subjects living under Liao rule, or for Song subjects dealing directly with the Liao. This development was carried further in the Jin, and then the Yuan. When the Jin defeated the Liao and drove back the Song armies, according to the treaty of 1142 they also took over those territories north of the Huai River that had once belonged to Song, meaning that, in addition to the Chinese population concentrated around Yan (the Liao Southern capital, modern Beijing), they administered another sizable group living in modern Hebei, Henan, Shandong, Shanxi, and parts of Shaanxi. In these altered circumstances, the new Jin rulers continued Liao usage by calling the Chinese subjects of the Liao they inherited (i.e., the descendants of former Song subjects who were now former Liao subjects) *Hanren*, and sometimes *Yanren*, but former Song subjects who had *not* been part of the

Liao were called *Nanren*.⁵⁷ This distinction, which was quite clearly maintained, made for an even further narrowing of the meaning of *Han*, which excluded them from the category *Zhongguo ren*.⁵⁸ The overwhelmingly preferred term for the Chinese living under Song rule was, in a pattern we have seen before, *Songren*.⁵⁹ *Nanren* and *Hanren* were differentiated not just by the Jin regime but by the Song government as well: *Hanren* refugees from the north who returned to Song territory were classified separately as *guizheng ren*. Zhu Xi explained the difference as follows:

Guizheng people are those who were originally from the Central Plain and who fell under barbarian [rule] but then returned to the Central Plain; they have escaped wickedness and returned to rectitude.⁶⁰

From this, it seems clear that, whereas from the modern perspective one would instinctively tend to see all these people as “Chinese,” in the Song the *guizheng ren* were viewed as belonging to a slightly different group. Once again, as in the Northern Wei, the fact of Northern rule had forced a redefinition of who the *Han* were.

Further complications were introduced in the Yuan period, particularly after the fall of the Song in 1279, when the Mongols assumed control over all of China proper. Much has been written about the Yuan status system, with its four categories: Mongol, *Semu* (Central Asian), *Hanren*, and *Nanren*. It is the last two categories that really interest us here. The basic division between them depended, as before, on who was on which side before military conquest brought about a political reorientation. Thus *Hanren* in the Yuan included all those who had been *Hanren* or *Han'er* in the Liao and Jin plus those who had been *Nanren* in the Jin (Yuan *Nanren* were former Song subjects now under the sway of the Mongol khan).⁶¹ But *Hanren* meant more than just this: It included essentially *everyone* who had been a Jin subject. This meant an assortment of at least eight different groups—including Khitans, Jurchens, Bohai, Koguryo, and the old *Hanren*—a conglomeration that was totally at odds with previous interpretations of *Han*. As such it conveyed more forcefully than ever before the idea that *Han* was a fungible and capacious term that could be expanded according to administrative need—such needs, after all, being the primary motive behind classifying populations in the first place—and lacked any firm ethnic connotations. We can say, I think, that for the Mongols, *Han* was synonymous with *Beiren*, “Northerner.” It was a supra-ethnic rubric, reminiscent of the encompassing category *Hua* introduced by the Northern Wei, except that, unlike *Hua*, it did not include everyone in the empire; there were limits, and former Southern Song subjects were outside

those limits (as were, of course, Mongols and Semu, too). In sum, then, in the Yuan, *Nanren* meant “Chinese” and *Hanren* meant “Northerner.” Had Yuan rule lasted longer, or had the Mongols not defeated the Song, it is conceivable that Chinese people today would be calling themselves the “*Nanzu*” or “*Songzu*.”

THE UNIFICATION OF THE HAN

The reassertion of southern political power in the shape of the Ming dynasty overturned once and for all the onomastic conventions of the Yuan world. Mongols and Semu were banished from the realm, as was—nominally, anyway—everything to do with the *Hu* (as the Mongols were frequently called by their Chinese enemies, reviving a term that had all but disappeared from use by the fifteenth century). Led by a former *Nanren*, Zhu Yuanzhang, the Ming, as is well known, championed a chauvinistic cause to defame the Mongols and gain legitimacy for himself.⁶² He had a difficult job, especially in the northern territories, which had not been part of “China” for at least two hundred and in some cases three hundred years. The local population had acculturated along the lines of a northern cultural synthesis, and it is open to question if they thought of themselves as “Chinese”—that is, in the sense of being *Zhongguo ren* as we mean it today—at all. To what degree the categories imposed by the Yuan for administrative purposes had come to affect individual identities is something we know little about and deserves further study. In any event, it must have been quite disorienting to northerners to discover that *Hanren* suddenly meant not just them but all the *Nanren*, too, whose speech they could not understand and various of whose customs differed quite considerably from their own.

Apart from the various military challenges that confronted him, the main task that lay before Zhu was to unify the country, not just in the sense of bringing all the provinces of China proper under his control, but more important in the sense of reintegrating Northerners and Southerners into a single group. Various ideological tools lay at his disposal, which have been exhaustively studied, but one way of going about this task that has not been much dwelt on was the deployment in the Ming of a single ethnonym, *Han*, for everyone in north and south alike.⁶³ *Nanren* might have been chosen for this, but the Han imperial model was one that Zhu consciously followed; plus, using this name would potentially make it easier for him to draw in the north, which to him was essentially alien territory. The Mongols had prepared the way by pushing a broadening of *Han* a

century earlier; now Zhu was broadening it yet again in one direction—by expanding *Han* to include Southerners—and tightening it in another—by excluding Mongols, Semu, and those in the *Hanren* group who had not been Song subjects, or who were as yet insufficiently acculturated (or motivated) to claim that identity. While usage in the early years of the Ming seems to have vacillated between Yuan and Ming norms, within a generation or so Jurchens and Khitans and Bohai and other Yuan-era *Hanren* were *Hanren* no longer, and a general identification reached between the Ming realm, the Central Lands (i.e., “China,” *Zhongguo*),⁶⁴ the “Chinese” (*Zhongguo ren*), and *Hanren*. A more detailed review of this process (beyond the scope of this chapter) would show how the situation eventually returned roughly to that of eight hundred years before, with *Hanren* reverting to mean “Chinese” in an ethnic sense. In the establishment of a kind of equivalence between *Han* and *Hua*—the later term enjoying very broad use in the Ming—we see the closing of the distance between ethno-cultural and political-administrative terms. A further adumbration of the term along these lines occurs in the seventeenth century, when *Han* was used as an ethno-administrative classification applied to the Chinese forces fighting with the Manchus, the so-called *Hanjun*.⁶⁵

I would close with two main points. First, I have tried to demonstrate in this chapter that we cannot refer unproblematically to the “Han” before the fifteenth century, nor can we assume that we are dealing with one people or a geographic center continually occupied by any such group. For these reasons, it is very difficult to argue that the putative unity of the “Han people” as such was a factor in maintaining the Chinese empire on the old Qin-Han model. If the story presented here is approximately correct, it is probably sounder historically to regard the common identity shared by *Hanren* today very much as an early modern artifact, the result of the Ming imperial enterprise, made urgent because of, and enabled by, the persistent occupation of significant parts of the Central Lands by Northern Others and the repeated challenge they threw down as to who the *Hua* or *Han* were.

The second point is simply to emphasize that the evolution of the term *Han* is by no means linear. I have focused here on the twists and turns taken by *Han* before the Ming. This convention of naming remained subject to further change in the Qing and later periods, however, owing, among other things, to the dramatic expansion of the borders of the empire under the Qing beyond those of the “Central Lands” and the renewed prominence of non-Chinese populations in national politics. As I hope to

have shown, the incongruencies raised in later imperial times were by no means new, and the difficult and sometimes contradictory negotiations that continue today between being “Han” and being “Chinese” are but the latest twist in a historical process stretching back to the sixth century, a process in which now, as then, the Other has played a role that is, in every sense, critical.

the mode of representation or the represented itself must determine the mode of representation, leading to a subject/object dichotomy. Boundaries are *not* a part of what is being classified.

CHAPTER 8

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1. Adachi Fumito, *Kanminzoku to ha dare ka: kodai Chūgoku to Nihon rettō o meguru minzoku, shakaigakuteki shiten* (Tokyo: Yubun shoin, 2006), 168.

2. Still, whatever information is produced through such work will not really help us understand the category *Han* as such, especially not when nearly all the DNA research that is done focuses on China's "ethnic groups," generally understood as referring to the non-Han. See Yonggang Yao et al., "Genetic Relationship of Chinese Ethnic Populations Revealed by mtDNA Sequence Diversity," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 118, no.1 (2002): 63–76; and "Mitochondrial DNA Sequence Polymorphism of Five Ethnic Populations from Northern China," *Human Genetics* 113, no.5 (2003): 391–405. In this and other work, geneticists have established the fact of a broad division between what they term northern and southern haplotypes. To be sure, some of this research does involve Han populations (e.g., Yao, "Phylogeographic Differentiation of Mitochondrial DNA in Han Chinese," *American Journal of Human Genetics* 70, no. 3 [2002]: 635–51), but this is not framed as work on "ethnic groups."

3. I offer a more detailed explanation in my essay, "Ethnicity in the Qing Eight Banners," in *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China*, ed. Pamela Kyle Crossley, Helen Siu, and Donald Sutton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 27–57. The problem of ethnicity in China is treated also in the introduction to Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 16–20. See also the discussions in Wang Mingke, *Huaxia bianyuan* (Taipei: Yunchen Publishers, 1997), 71–78; and Marc S. Abramson, *Ethnic Identity in Tang China* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 1–17.

4. Elliott, "Ethnicity in the Qing Eight Banners," 34.

5. "In the ancient world ethnicity was widespread, although nationality in the political sense was rare." John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 105.

6. References to much of this work will be found in the notes to Elliott, "Ethnicity in the Qing Eight Banners"; and Abramson, *Ethnic Identity in Tang China*. See also the edited volume of Hutchinson and Smith mentioned in the preceding note.

7. Cf. the work of Jonathan Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cam-

bridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) and *Hellenicity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Irad Malkin, ed., *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity* (Washington, DC: Harvard Center for Hellenic Studies, 2001); and Mark J. Hudson, *Ruins of Identity: Ethnogenesis in the Japanese Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999). For treatments of ethnicity in premodern China, see the work of Wang, Abramson, and Elliott, cited earlier; important new scholarship in this same vein includes that by Erica J. Brindley, Miranda Brown, Leo Shin, and others. Studies of ethnicity in twentieth-century China using what Abramson calls the "post-sinological approach" are too numerous to list; two important books that helped chart the course are Stevan Harrell, ed., *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995); and Melissa Brown, ed., *Negotiating Ethnicities in China and Taiwan* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1996).

8. Crossley, Siu, and Sutton, *Empire at the Margins*, 5.

9. Evident from the essays on "Ethnicity in the Modern World" collected in Hutchinson and Smith, *Ethnicity*, 133–86.

10. Crossley, Siu, and Sutton, *Empire at the Margins*, 14. The authors' meaning here is somewhat opaque: One would have thought that most anything historians might have to say about ethnicity in the period before the nineteenth century—or, indeed, about anything in any period at all—would be regarded as a "matter of interpretation."

11. The word *ethnicity* first appeared in the *OED* in 1953 (Hutchinson and Smith, *Ethnicity*, 4).

12. The classic work of this early phase of ethnic studies is Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan's 1963 book on contemporary American society, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1963), in which "race" was clearly a primary concern. But it is worth noting that ethnicity has come to be framed much more broadly than just about "racism," since it permits the inclusion of groups whose identity may lack that phenotypical aspect of difference. This makes "race" a much less useful analytical category for thinking about socially constructed alterity, historically or otherwise, except in certain carefully defined contexts.

13. An exception to this generalization—unexpected, since it does not seem to represent the approach taken in the majority of essays in the volume—is to be found at one point in the introduction to *Empire at the Margins*, where the authors state, "To be ethnic is to be marginal, not part of the canon, not part of the established culture central to legitimacy of the state, not mainstream, not authoritative" (5). This would seem to make it impossible to admit that anything like Han "ethnicity" has ever existed, or could exist. This argument repeats points made earlier in Pamela Kyle Crossley, "Thinking about Ethnicity in Early Modern China," *Late Imperial China* 11, no.1 (June 1990): 1–35.

14. See Uradyn E. Bulag, "Mongolian Ethnicity and Linguistic Anxiety in China," *American Anthropologist* 105, no. 4 (December 2003): 9.

15. See the work of Wang Mingke, cited earlier; also Bin Jiang and He

Cuiping, eds., *Guojia, shichang yu mailuohua de zuqun* (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 2000); Zhang Haiyang, *Zhongguo de duoyuan wenhua yu Zhongguo ren de rentong* (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2006); and Jian Zhixiang, *Zuqun guishu de ziwo rentong yu shehui dingyi* (Beijing: Minzu cbs, 2006). A search of the electronic China Academic Journals Full-text Database (www.cnki.net) shows that *zuqun* comes to be used commonly in titles only beginning in 2005.

16. The importance of the Other in the process of ethnic formation is recognized, too, by many Chinese scholars. See, e.g., Zhong Han, "Minzushi yanjiuzhong de 'tazhe' shijiao," *Lishi yanjiu*, no.1 (2008): 43–66.

17. The mutual referentiality of these terms is nicely captured in what may be the earliest use of the expression *hushuo* in a Southern Song text, *Qidong yeyu*, by Zhou Mi, where Han Zhou, speaking of Zhou Jun, says, "Here comes that fellow again, talking gibberish (*zhe han you lai hushuo*)." Cited in Morohashi, *Dai Kan-Wa jiten* (Tokyo: Taishukan shofen, 1943). The use of *Han* (or *Hanzi*) as a colloquial term for an adult male—yet another chapter of the story of *Han*—seems to have become common at this time. See Chen Gaohua, "Lun Yuandai de chengwei xisu," *Zhejiang xuekan* 5 (2000): 123–30.

18. For an explanation of the source of the name *Han* for the river and Liu Bang's reasons for choosing to name his dynasty for the river, see Hu Axiang, "Liu Bang Hanguo hao kaoyuan," *Shixue yuekan* 6 (2001): 57–62.

19. This is firmly demonstrated in Chen Shu, "Han'er Hanzi shuo," *Shehui kexue zhanxian* 1 (1986): 290; see also Wang, *Huaxia*, 318; Zhang, *Zhongguo de duoyuan wenhua*, 31; and elsewhere. Based on occurrences in *Shiji* and the *Hanshu*, Wang notes that the most common term of self-identification at this period was simply *Zhongguo ren* (290 n. 1). He argues that it was during this time that the limits of "China" and "Chineseness" initially hardened along the lines that later Chinese states would generally assume, but on the basis of terms such as *Zhongguo* and *Huaxia*. Applying the term *Hanren*, not to mention *Hanzu*, to describe "the Chinese" at this time should be seen as highly anachronistic—though one sees it often, even in serious historical scholarship.

20. On the repeated emergence of *Han* as a dynastic name, see Hu Axiang, "Zhongguo lishishang de Hanguo hao," *Jiangsu xingzhengyuan xuebao* 23, no. 5 (2005), 130–36.

21. Kawamoto Yoshiaki, *Gi-Shin Nanbokuchō jidai no minzoku mondai* (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin, 1998), 30–32; Yang Shaoyun, "Becoming *Zhongguo*, Becoming Han: Tracing and Reconceptualizing Ethnicity in Ancient North China, 770 B.C.–A.D. 581" (Master's thesis, National University of Singapore, 2007), 52–55.

22. Peter A. Boodberg, "The Language of the T'o-Pa Wei," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 1, no. 2 (July 1936): 185.

23. Kawamoto, *Gi-Shin minzoku mondai*, 52–53; Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey, eds., *Culture and Power in the Reconstitution of the Chinese Realm, 200–600* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 7; Mark Edward Lewis, *China between Empires: The Northern and Southern Dynasties* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 81, 167

24. Both Naitō Kōnan and Miyazaki Ichisada saw the Northern dynasties as a key moment in the evolution of Chinese society, in which (in Miyazaki's language), the "civilizationism" (*bunmeishugi*) of the Hua was challenged by the "rusticity" (*sobokushugi*) of the Hu, resulting in the erosion of the privileges of elite families and, eventually, the emergence of meritocratic ideals in the Sui and Tang. The tension between Hu and Hua thus figures as a major theme of Japanese scholarship on the period. See Kawamoto, *Gi-Shin minzoku mondai*, 13; and Michio Tanigawa, "Sōsetsu" (General introduction), in *Gi-Shin Nanbokuchō, Zui-Tō jidaishi no kihon mondai*, ed. M. Tanigawa et al. (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin, 1997), 19–20. For a brief review of scholarship on the period generally, see the introduction to Albert E. Dien, *State and Society in Early Medieval China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 1–30. The most recent complete treatment in English is Lewis, *China between Empires*.

25. Dorothy C. Wong, "Ethnicity and Identity: Northern Nomads as Buddhist Art Patrons during the Period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties," in *Political Frontiers, Ethnic Boundaries, and Human Geographies in Chinese History*, ed. Nicola Di Cosmo and Don Wyatt (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 82–85. Kawamoto relates the story of a Northern Wei minister of Chinese descent who was executed for having mocked Buddhist beliefs (*Gi-Shin minzoku mondai*, 42).

26. Wong, "Ethnicity and Identity," 82, citing in particular the work of Albert Dien. "Hybrid vigor" is Audrey Spiro's phrase; see her essay, "Hybrid Vigor: Memory, Mimesis, and the Matching of Meanings in Fifth-Century Buddhist Art," in Pearce, Spiro, and Ebrey, *Culture and Power*, 125–48. Kawamoto speaks in similar terms of the "energy" of the Northern Wei and other Hu regimes (*Gi-Shin minzoku mondai*, 344). "Borealization," on the other hand, is a term I would like to suggest in place of "Xianbei-ization" or "Sārbi-ization" to describe the acculturation of the Chinese generally to northern norms. The word is based on the Latin *borealis*, from Boreas, the Greek god of the north wind. Whether this or the term proposed by Victor Mair, *Tabgatchization*, is preferable is a matter left to the reader; his emphasis on the importance of seeing cultural change as moving in both directions is in any event the same. See his review of James O. Caswell's *Written and Unwritten: A New History of the Buddhist Caves at Yungang*, in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 52, no. 1 (June 1992): 358–59.

27. See the description in Lewis of representations of "a Chinese history and cosmos in which everyone was Xianbei, or a Xianbei world that embodied Chinese history and values" (*China between Empires*, 168).

28. See Xiaofei Tian, "The Cultural Construction of North and South," in *Beacon Fire and Shooting Star: The Literary Culture of the Liang*, 502–557 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007), chap. 7.

29. Liu, *Huzu wangchao*, 167–71. On similar bestowals in a slightly later period, see Albert E. Dien, "The Bestowal of Surnames under the Western Wei-Northern Chou: A Case of Counter-Acculturation," *T'oung Pao* 63, nos. 2–3 (1977): 137–77.

30. In a recent master's thesis, Shaoyun Yang has shown that it was at this time that the *Zuozhuan* phrase now so familiar to us—*fei wo zulei, qi xin bi yi*—was creatively reinterpreted by the Western Jin literatus Jiang Tong (d. 310) as part of an argument as to why the “Rong barbarians” (i.e., the Qiang and Di) who had been allowed to settle in the Guanzhong area should be relocated. In the *Xi Rong lun*, Jiang combined the *Zuozhuan* phrases (originally a reference to lineages) and *bu yu Hua tong* (not the same as the *Hua*—in its original context a comment on material distinctions only in food and clothing), joining them with his own phrase, *Rong-Di zhitai* (the state of mind of the Rong and Di), to form a “quotation” from a classical source that would support his own exclusionist position. See Yang, “Becoming *Zhongguo*,” 62–64. The essay is found in the biography of Jiang Tong, *Jinshu* j. 56.

31. This characterization of the *Zuo Commentary* should not be taken to mean that ethnic exclusivism is all-pervasive there; on the contrary, many passages suggest the possibility of transformation of “barbarians” into cultured *Hua*. See the discussions in Yuri Pines, “Beasts or Humans? Pre-Imperial Origins of the ‘Sino-Barbarian’ Dichotomy,” in *Mongols, Turks, and Others: Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World*, ed. Reuven Amitai and Michal Biran (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 69–73.

32. Scott Pearce, “Form and Matter: Archaizing Reform in Sixth-Century China,” in Pearce, Spiro, and Ebrey, *Culture and Power*, 164–69.

33. Yang, “Becoming *Zhongguo*,” 85.

34. This, the first of a number of “Later Zhao” states, was founded by Liu Yuan, who, though a sinicized Xiongnu, claimed to represent a restoration of the Han house; his regime is sometimes called “Han Zhao.” Lewis, *China between Empires*, 51, 145.

35. Victor Mair, “The North(west)ern Peoples and the Recurrent Origins of the Chinese State,” in *The Teleology of the Modern Nation-State: Japan and China*, ed. Joshua Fogel (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 77. Relevant here is the observation by Mark Edward Lewis that it was under the Northern Wei, when for the first time “nomadic chiefs ruled over both Chinese and nomads within an empire,” that an expanded idea of “universal empire” took hold, in which political legitimacy hinged mainly on a conqueror’s willingness to abide by certain expectations, including building a capital, sacrificing to Heaven, and providing offices and salaries (Lewis, *China between Empires*, 150–51). While I would agree that this imperial universalism aimed to transcend any “overriding loyalty to a Han Chinese people and their culture”—a sensibility that is admittedly explicitly tied to the nation-state—it seems to me that one must not overestimate (whether in the Northern Wei or in later periods, including the present) the degree to which universalism trumped (or trumps) ethnic particularism.

36. Kawamoto, *Gi-Shin minzoku mondai*, 95.

37. Chen, “Han’er,” 291; Jia Jingyan, “Luelun Han minzu de xingcheng,” in *Zhongguo gudai minzu zhi*, ed. Hua Xiaolin (Beijing: Wenshizhe, 1993), 16, citing Li Ciming (1830–1895), probably *Beishi buzhuàn*. Both Chen and Jia

provide numerous attestations of various uses of *Han*. Li Yimang makes the same point in “Shishi Hanzu,” in Hua, *Zhongguo gudai minzu zhi*, 24.

38. *Beiqi shu* j. 21: 294.

39. *Beishi*, j. 6: 215.

40. *Weishu* j. 114: 3034.

41. Yang, “Becoming *Zhongguo*,” 93–94, citing the *Weishu* and *Nanqi shu*.

42. Sima Guang, *Zizhi tongjian*, ann. Hu Sanxing (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1956), j. 167. Elsewhere, in the commentary to *juan* 22, Hu offered a more complete genealogy of the term: “In Han times, the Xiongnu called the people of the Central Plains ‘men of Qin.’ In the Tang and in the present dynasty, they [referring to the nomadic heirs of the Xiongnu] call [people] of the Central Plains *Han*, as in *Han’er*, *Hanren*, and so on. This has become the custom.” Cited in Zhao Yongchun, “Shilun Jinren de ‘Zhongguo guan,’” *Zhongguo bianjiang shidi yanjiu* 19, no.4 (2009): 4.

43. Kawamoto, *Gi-Shin minzoku mondai*, 361.

44. Xiaofei Tian, personal communication, December 23, 2008.

45. My thanks to Yuri Pines for this suggestion. For comparison, a fascinating exploration of the afterlife of imperial labels in the Ottoman empire is found in Cemal Kafadar, “A Rome of One’s Own: Reflections Cultural Geography and Identity in the Lands of Rum,” *Muqarnas* 24 (2007): 7–26.

46. Jia, “Han minzu,” 16; Lewis, *China between Empires*, 167; Yang discusses this issue at length in “Becoming *Zhongguo*,” 97–106. See also Liu Fugen, “Sanguo Wei-Jin Nanbei chao mali yuyan shuolue,” *Zhejiang jiaoyu xueyuan xuebao* 6, no. 6 (2003): 35, who emphasizes that *Han’er* was used by “minority peoples” to insult the Chinese.

47. Yang points to a passage in the *Beishi* where the Särbi word *Ran’gan* is mentioned, perhaps with this meaning. Yang, “Becoming *Zhongguo*,” 93.

48. Based on searches of phrases in the electronic Scripta Sinica *Hanji dianzi wenxian ziliao ku* database version of the *Suishu*, maintained by Academia Sinica. All searches of dynastic histories cited in the notes are from this database.

49. Of the ten occurrences of *Hanren* in the Tang histories, about half reflect the new usage as an ethnonym. This proportion is greater in the Five Dynasties histories. Again, these conclusions are reached on the basis of the frequency with which *Han* and its various compounds appear in the dynastic histories. I am aware that there are limitations to the use of these texts as indices and that the same search terms are found in other contemporary texts as well. My goal, at least at this point, is not to be exhaustive but to determine relative frequency and general range of meaning in elite discourse; for this purpose, the dynastic histories will serve adequately.

50. Cited in Chen “Han’er,” 9. The original text is found in *juan* 1 of Ma’s best-known work, *Lanzhenzi*.

51. Peter Bol, personal communication, April 16, 2008. See also Bol, “Geography and Culture: The Middle-Period Discourse on the *Zhong guo*, the Central Country,” in *Kongjian yu wenhua changyu*, ed. Wang Ailing (Taipei: Center for Chinese Studies, 2009).

52. One of the first to remark on the changed meaning of *Hanren* was Zhao Yi, who wrote about this in *Nianershi zhaji*, *juan* 28, “Jin Yuan juyou Hanren Nanren zhi ming.” He fails to mention the use of the term in the Liao, however, saying only that the Jin applied it to those living in Liao territory when they took over.

53. *Huaren* appears not once in the *Liaoshi* or *Jinshi*, and only twice in the *Songshi*, both in sections on foreign countries.

54. Liu Pujiang, “Shuo ‘Hanren,’” in *Liao-Jin shilun* (Shenyang: Liaoning University Press, 1999), 110.

55. Liu, “Shuo ‘Hanren,’” 111; Liu, *Huzu wangchao*, 208.

56. Liu, “Shuo ‘Hanren,’” 121.

57. Jia, “Han minzu,” 18; Liu, “Shuo ‘Hanren,’” 111; Meng Siming, *Yuandai shehui jieji zhidu* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1955), 35.

58. In an edict of 1161, the Song emperor is quoted as saying that he would welcome any who come to him from the Jin side, “Jurchen, Bohai, Khitan, and Han’er alike,” and that they will be treated no differently from the “people of the Central Lands.” Liu, “Shuo ‘Hanren,’” 111. Quotation from the Song *Huiyao*.

59. I base this conclusion on the frequency of its appearance in the *Jinshi* relative to other terms.

60. Cited in Liu, “Shuo ‘Hanren,’” 112. This was in distinction to *guiming ren*, defined by Zhu Xi as “people who were originally not from the Central Plain. They are like the Yao people who lived in caves and have come to the Central Plain, emerging from the darkness into the light.”

61. Yanai Wataru, “Gendai shakai no san kaikyū,” in *Mōkōshi kenkyū* (Tokyo: Tōkō shoin, 1930), 345 ff. Chen Yinke’s “Yuandai Hanren yiming kao” confirms these same conclusions. Both men built on prior scholarship by Zhao Yi and Qian Daxin.

62. It is worth observing that this aspect of Ming ideology is easily exaggerated, since in between talk of the stench of mutton and Mongol perfidy, Zhu also took the time to make it clear that he was open to the idea of Mongols (and others) as his loyal subjects. The ambiguous place of Mongols in the Ming empire is the subject of much work by David Robinson; for example, see his “Politics, Force, and Ethnicity in Ming China: Mongols and the Abortive Coup of 1461,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 59, no.1 (June 1999): 79–123.

63. Extracts from the *Da Ming Huidian*, for instance, show that *Hanren* was used commonly to refer to Chinese subjects of the Ming wherever they might live when it was necessary to differentiate them from those whom we might now reasonably call the “non-Han.” See the following, dated 1546: 又令、凡川廣雲貴陝西等處。但有漢人交結夷人、互相買賣借貸誑騙。引惹邊釁。及潛住苗寨、教誘為亂、貽害地方者。俱問發邊衛、永遠充軍。 See also the emperor’s 1374 appeal to the Dali kingdom in which he notes, “Seven years have passed since the day . . . my many brave men brought peace and restored to the Han people our old lands, unifying China,” *Ming shilu*, j. 92.

64. That through the period of Jurchen rule a distinction was drawn be-

tween *Zhongguo* as a cultural idea and *Zhongguo* as the name for the state that controlled the Central Plains, regardless of which ethnic group was in political power, is persuasively argued in Zhao, "Shilun Jinren de 'Zhongguo guan.'" "

65. A notable difference between the Hanjun in the Qing and the forces of the same name under the Yuan is that while the former was composed of men taken solely from households of ethnic Chinese (called in Manchu *Nikan*) that had come under Qing rule before the 1644 conquest, the latter were from the entire range of households classified as Hanren in the Yuan.

CHAPTER 9

I wish to thank the participants of the Critical Han Studies Symposium and Workshop, hosted by Stanford University (April 2008), for their questions on my initial paper. In particular, I thank Jiang Yonglin, Don Sutton, Emma Teng, and the editors, who provided extremely valuable input. I also presented the paper at "Insiders and Outsiders in Chinese History," a Yale conference in honor of my adviser and teacher, Jonathan Spence. I not only acknowledge my tremendous debt to Jonathan but also thank conference participants, especially Roger Des Forges, for their helpful critiques. Finally, I thank the two anonymous reviewers for providing careful and thoughtful insights that have improved this chapter.

1. For Harrell's statements on ethnic identity, ethnic groups, and ethnic consciousness, see "Introduction: Civilizing Projects and the Reaction to Them," in *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, ed. Stevan Harrell (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 27–28; Stevan Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic in Southwest China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 21.

2. For Elliott's statements on ethnicity, see Mark C. Elliott, this volume; "Ethnicity in the Qing Eight Banners," in *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China*, ed. Pamela Kyle Crossley, Helen F. Siu, and Donald S. Sutton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 32–35; *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 16–19.

3. David Snow, Sharon Oselin, and Catherine Corrigan-Brown, "Identity," in *Encyclopedia of Social Theory*, ed. George Ritzer (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Reference, 2005), vol. 1, 390–93.

4. For a recent introduction to the field, see Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, "Critical Race Theory," in *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, ed. Maryanne Horowitz (Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2005), vol. 2, 501–7.

5. Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Peter Kolchin, "Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America," *Journal of American History* 89, no. 1 (June 2002): 154–73.

6. Kai-wing Chow, "Imagining the Boundaries of Blood: Zhang Binglin and the Invention of the Han 'Race' in Modern China," in *The Construction*