

## By Way of Introduction: *Minzu Tuanjie* and Its Discontents

This book represents an effort to understand the multifaceted Mongol experience in China, past and present, and through it, to highlight broader issues pertaining to the Mongols and other peoples on China's vast borders. It particularly seeks to cast light on the development and praxis of the concept of minority nationalities in the People's Republic of China in the context of the politics of national unity, *minzu tuanjie*. Above all, this book explores from diverse angles the moral and political implications and contradictions of *minzu tuanjie* in a socialist regime.

Rather than assuming totalitarian power on the part of the Chinese Communist Party, I have explored some of the intricate relations between socialism and nationalism that produce both resistance and complicity and the moral dilemmas that have confronted Mongols and Chinese in negotiating nationality issues. Thus the book does not privilege the Mongols as a colonized ethnic minority with "authentic" voices challenging "power." Instead, the text is a conscious exploration of blurred boundaries—geographic, conceptual, and ideological—offering an analysis of the complex modern history of the Mongols, nationalism and communism, and ethnic relations in terms of land tenure, class struggle, tribal and regional antagonism, as well as the state's nationality policy.

I have written this book with several questions in mind. First, to understand the characteristics of Chinese national unity, an ideology framed to define Chinese-minority relations and encapsulated in the expression "*minzu tuanjie*." Such a unity is premised on the unity of diverse groups, many of which had been antagonistic to one another throughout history, but now find themselves in the territorial confines of China through various processes. Chinese political, cultural, and historiographical discourse represents them as conscious or thinking subjects who fought together to achieve the present Chinese national form. Sec-

ond, there are questions pertaining to Mongolian nationalism and communism. The Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region emerged in 1947 as a product of cooperation between Mongol communists, led by Ulanhu and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Mongols played a significant role in the CCP victory in the civil war that brought the Party to power. How do Mongol nationalism and socialism configure in a China that is also nationalistic and communist in its own right? Third, given that Mongols constitute a tiny minority not only of the Chinese population but even of the population of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, how can they legitimately exercise their rights of self-government as the titular nationality in their historic homeland? Fourth, Mongols in China do not live in isolation from the Mongol world; they constitute part of a transnational community, one with historical, cultural, and genealogical bonds with Mongols in Mongolia. This, then, raises a moral and political question about the extent to which the struggle for Mongol cultural integrity and reproduction in China and Mongol aspirations to achieve legitimacy as citizens come into conflict with a demand for authenticity in a wider Mongolian community. Finally, should we treat Mongols as a “category” or as a “community”? If a community is imagined as sovereign and limited, we should ask not only about its “national belonging” (i.e., belonging to a larger national, yet culturally antagonistic, state), but also about the integrity and morality of the culture of the community in the process of achieving or losing that “belonging.”

Some of the previously mentioned issues haunted me while I researched my previous book, and they continue to resonate with me as I write this one. Whereas *Nationalism and Hybridity in Mongolia* (Bulag 1998) records the sense of displacement and predicament of Inner Mongols in the wider Mongol world, this book represents my continued effort to comprehend the historical process by which Mongols have sought to survive as Mongols in China.

### MONGOLS AT CHINA'S EDGE

Inner Mongolia presents a paradox for understanding contemporary ethnopolitics in China. Unlike Tibet and Xinjiang, whose ethnonationalist movements have attracted great attention, inviting speculation concerning a direct ethnic challenge to the communist regime and even anticipating a Soviet-style scenario of national disintegration, Mongols apparently no longer exhibit such an independent spirit. Whatever its cultural and ethnic links with the Republic of Mongolia on its northern border, Inner Mongolia appears a quiet backwater. Indeed, this state of Inner Mongolia is often presented as a possible fate for Tibet and Xinjiang, as Inner Mongolia is considered in the very name the Chinese government wants the world at large to call Inner Mongolia: *Nei Monggol*, a hybridized name combining Chinese word *Nei* (Inner) with *Monggol*, the classical

Mongolian spelling for “Mongol.” This vulgarized hybridity displays a certain poetic authenticity of the Mongolness, while simultaneously denoting its political belonging.

The light weight that Inner Mongolia carries in China’s ethnopolitics poses interesting questions, not least because, in recent decades, it has been ignored in comparison with Tibet and Xinjiang. Minorities in the southwest, especially in Yunnan province, have moreover attracted much Western anthropological gaze, by virtue of their purported peacefulness and colorfulness, as well as their ascending importance in Chinese exhibitions celebrating the nation’s colorful ethnic and cultural diversity. Mongols thus have been doubly sidelined in both China and in Western academia: They are neither “dangerous” nor “colorful.” How, then, did the Mongols manage to come to such a pass? Indeed, the very question requires a study, if only to shed light on the great disjuncture between the historical image of Mongols as the most ferocious world conquerors and their current “peacefulness” or “sheepishness.”

For those with historical knowledge of the Mongols, the link of Mongols with China—in a unitary state without Mongol domination—also poses a conundrum. It is difficult to reconcile the fact that Mongols constitute an absolute minority in China’s Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, while enjoying nominal status as its titular rulers. Given the historical conflicts between Mongols and Chinese, often with Mongols conquering or pillaging China, how do such historical memories figure in the development and maintenance of the Mongols as a national minority in a multinational state having Chinese as its core? Above all, what justifies China’s “ownership” of Inner Mongolia within the territorial and moral confines of China, which Mongols have trespassed historically and geographically, as testified by the existence, however tenuous, of the independent Republic of Mongolia and other Mongol republics in Russia, such as the Buryat and Kalmyk republics? These issues open up further questions of Mongols in China: about Chinese approaches to ethnic management, ideological, cultural, and physical; as well as about how, when, and why Mongols in China have been imagined.

Modern nation-states have many ways of managing their diversity, aiming to cohere diverse and often conflicting groups into a unitary whole. Ironically, nation-states usually deny such a constructivist effort, often going to great lengths to “naturalize” the belonging of different groups to the nation, thereby seeking to achieve a seamless entity to defy any challenges. Narrating the Mongols into a naturalized, but also a subordinate, group internal to China since antiquity, in terms of power and civilization, has been the task of many a contemporary Chinese historian. But this naturalization has never been easy. Until the early twentieth century, Mongols exhibited great strength vis-à-vis the Chinese. Indeed, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Chinese experienced the iron rule of the Mongols, as did many other peoples across Eurasia. It may not be an exaggeration to claim that the very consciousness of Chinese-ness



dynasty, and "Our Great Qing." At the age of 20 I then heard that "our" Chinggis Khan conquered Europe, and it was "our" most glorious era. Only when I reached 25 did I learn that the so-called "our" most glorious era was nothing but when Mongols conquered China. We became lackeys. And not until August this year, because I read three books about Mongol history to check some stories, did I realize that Mongol conquest of "Russia," invasion of Hungary and Austria preceded their conquest of the whole of China, and Chinggis Khan at that time was not yet our Khan. Rather the Russians had longer credentials for being enslaved, and it is they who should say, "Our Chinggis Khan conquered China, and it was our most glorious era." (Lu Xun 1981: 631–32)

At the turn of the twenty-first century, numerous books and movies about Chinggis Khan are being churned out in China, often with a logo, "The Only Chinese to defeat the Europeans." Mongols, or rather their history and their quintessential heroes, have fought for the Chinese—wholeheartedly, it seems.

This greatness of Mongols, in its positive or negative and Chinese or Western representations, is today often divorced from the historical path through which Mongols came down. In the seventeenth century, Mongols lost their prerogatives to another power, the Manchus. Mongols became a junior partner in founding the Qing and enjoyed more privileged status *vis-à-vis* the Chinese within this Manchu empire. The Qing empire experience, however, proved devastating in its consequences. Qing territorial reorganization of the Mongols into mutually exclusive but loyal subjects to the Qing court fundamentally undermined the Mongol potential to rise as a great power once again under a new leadership. On the more positive side, the Qing territorial designation and encouragement of Tibetan Buddhism gave rise to a new Mongol historical and cultural consciousness. Above all, it inculcated a territorial consciousness that had ramifications for not only an internal tribal boundary, but also a boundary with China—the latter thanks to the Qing policy of segregating Mongols from Chinese in order to preserve Mongol pristine prowess. The consequence of this Qing experience resonates strongly today, for not only do Mongols remain split along the line of Inner and Outer Mongolia, the latter becoming an independent state as soon as the Qing collapsed in 1911, but Inner Mongolia was colonized by Chinese warlords and subsequently came under Chinese Republican administration.

The transition from an empire to a nation-state is never an easy one, especially for China. Louisa Schein succinctly outlines the two nationalisms China embraces: "They can be referred to as Han nationalism and Chinese nationalism. Han nationalism was concerned with boundaries between peoples within the shifting territory of the Chinese polity, specifically between Han and those they designated as 'barbarians.' Chinese nationalism rose in response to incidences of foreign imperialist aggression that prompted a unifying within the physical boundary of China against the outside" (2000: 108). Here, we have a

problem, almost a dialectical one. Han nationalism originally targeted Manchus and Mongols, who for hundreds of years had been China's historic enemies. How, then, can Manchus, Mongols, and other non-Chinese peoples be accommodated as equal national siblings in unity against a racial imperialism from without? This dialectical conundrum is fascinating, especially when those now styled as minority nationalities persistently refuse to be confined to this newly imagined sinocentric community. To what extent is Chinese nationalism civic, as opposed to a primordial Han nationalism?

These are particularly pertinent questions regarding Mongols. Their incorporation into China was not a smooth one, by virtue of the fact that Outer Mongolia—the other half of the Mongolian geobody—became independent, allegedly with the assistance of Russian imperialists. Inner Mongolia, because of its geographical proximity to China's political centers, ultimately failed to win independence or unification with Outer Mongolia—not without a fight, of course. Much of the first half of the twentieth century witnessed the Inner Mongols languishing under Chinese colonialism, which erased Inner Mongolia as an entity, dividing the area under several Chinese provinces, at various times including Gansu, Ningxia, Suiyuan, Chahar, Rehe, Jilin, Liaoning, and Heilongjiang. Inner Mongolia experienced massive militarized Chinese immigration, leading to the opening up of Mongol grassland for Chinese agricultural development. Various attempts were made for Inner Mongolian independence from China or for unification with the Mongolian People's Republic, even resorting to collaboration with the Japanese, in the hope for deliverance from Chinese rule. A Mongol communist movement eventually succeeded in collaborating with the Chinese Communist Party, entering strategic alliances against the Japanese and the National Chinese government, in exchange for CCP support of an Inner Mongolian autonomy consistent with the proclaimed communist goals of colonial liberation.

An Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region under Chinese communist aegis was founded on May 1, 1947, two and a half years before the founding of the People's Republic of China. It expanded its territory, dismantling Chinese provinces built on Inner Mongolian territory, and only in 1956 took the shape that we know today. Ironically, Mongols were made the titular nationality of the autonomous region, but as early as 1947 they became an absolute minority in their own homeland, with a ratio of one Mongol to five Chinese.

History thus poses profound questions, questions somewhat different from those related to Tibet and Xinjiang and perhaps to other minorities in the southwest. How does the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, which was founded as a demonstration of the communist spirit of national equality, configure in the two nationalisms that China embraces? How do Mongols, especially communist Mongols, explain their path until today to prove the resolution of their own "nationality question"? How are the historical memories and cultural differences of Mongols and Chinese mediated in a socialist, but also nationalist, regime?

**Above all, what is the future for the Mongols in China, when the nation increasingly abandons its socialist veneer and promotes a more virulent nationalism that centers on the discourse of minzu tuanjie (national unity) and minzu fertile (national splitism)? This book attempts to answer some, if not all, of these questions.**

### MINZU TUANJIE AND ITS DISCONTENTS

The People's Republic of China, a state founded in October 1949 on the premise of a radical communist vision of building a new society for the emancipation of all humanity, ironically defined itself as a unitary but multinational state (*tongyi de duo minzu guojia*), based on the Qing imperial geographical domain. Such a nation-building principle has set the stage for the clash between two contradictory phenomena: the desire on the part of the state to promote and enforce unity, homogenizing the nationscape; and the desire of each minority nationality to preserve distinctive cultural and social characteristics and which may or may not wish to remain within a "unitary" Chinese state. In what ways are such tensions in China different or similar to those in other nation-states? It is no exaggeration to say that no single state in the world entirely meets the condition of a nation-state, which, according to Ernest Gellner (1983), must make the boundaries of the nation and the state congruent. But since nation-states are the only legitimate territorial organizations recognized in the current world order, congruency of the boundaries of nation and state is nonetheless the ideal for any nation-state to achieve. This is especially ironic for Europe and North America, the wellsprings of nationalism, because they have been torn between the nationalist ideal and the multicultural or multiracial reality. Since the 1960s the civil rights struggle and myriad other conflicts in those countries may be characterized as striving to enlarge the discursive space of the nation, dislodging the monopoly of the nation by bourgeois elites, and redefining the terms of citizenship so that the "fragments" of the nation—ethnic, racial, gender, religious and class, among others—can be accommodated and represented in the nation without discrimination. Many of these countries now strive to achieve a new model of diversity—multiculturalism. To be sure, the struggle for minority rights is far from complete, and repression and discrimination take various overt and covert forms. Moreover, struggle for multiculturalism may be as much a struggle for recognition and rights by marginal groups as it is an elite effort to "manage" tensions within the nation. Nevertheless, the contours and discourses of nationalism and diversity have experienced subtle and far-reaching changes in these societies.

In contrast to these multicultural countries, China confronts a different set of problems of diversity. Like the former Soviet Union, China consists of a mosaic of many territorial nationalities whose historic homelands have been incorporated into the modern Chinese state and whose positions have been transformed

from being sovereign or semi-sovereign people on China's periphery to minority nationalities. And yet these minorities, instead of being organized in a federation as in the former Soviet Union—thereby recognizing and giving corporate expression to their intrinsic national integrity—have been made an integral part of a unitary Chinese nation and granted limited powers of regional autonomy. This is not to understate the ways and extent to which the Soviet Union suppressed autonomous expressions of nationalities, culturally and politically. Here I only want to note that while both the former Soviet republics and the Chinese autonomous regions were imbricated within a system dominated by Russians and Chinese, the different state-making principles and strategies and the differential nature of demographic disparity had different consequences.

A legitimate question is whether the regional autonomy granted to national minorities in China encourages a sense of separate nationhood for Mongols or contributed to the integration of Mongols into the Chinese state. This question echoes recent debates among Sovietologists regarding the effect of Soviet nationality policy in destroying the Soviet Union. Yuri Slezkine (1996), for instance, criticizes Soviet policies of what he calls "compensatory 'nation-building'" for fostering localism and nationalism that eventually brought down the Soviet Union. Francine Hirsch (2000), on the other hand—in my view, more accurately—argues that for Soviet policymakers, colonization and "making nations" went hand in hand, through a process of what she calls double assimilation—the assimilation of diverse peoples into official nationality categories and the assimilation of nationally categorized groups into an all-union political, economic, and ideational whole. This is a participatory and multifaceted process: "as new dominant nationalities and national minorities used a common vocabulary and standardized administrative procedures to fight for resources and assert their rights, they also become increasingly anchored in the Soviet state and society" (Hirsch 2000: 225).

China's autonomous regions, somewhat like the ethnoterritorial republics in the Soviet Union, gave rise to "expectations of belonging," in which titular nationalities have a sense that they "own" the autonomous territorial units. But whereas the Soviet republics institutionalized that ownership, and the problem derived from the fact that "the nationalities 'possessed' their respective territorial republics rather than being constituted by them" (Brubaker 1996: 46), in China there is an additional dimension. This centers on the fact that the emphasis on "unity," backed up by overwhelming Chinese majority population (not only nationally, but in most instances even within the putative autonomous regions), together with the power of the state and army, renders unattainable or suspect any promise of national minority "autonomy."

Perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of contemporary Chinese nation-building is the framing of the concept minzu, which denotes both a nation and an ethnic group. Minzu (nationality) is part and parcel of Chinese nation-state building, which is marked by what Michel Foucault has called governmental-

ity—the application of techniques of surveillance and control to a whole range of institutions of a political economy and moral community (cf. Burchell et al. 1991). China's minzu-building project can be understood as a boundary-producing project predicated on the Chinese notion of genealogy and Stalin's four criteria defining nationality: common territory, common economy, common language, and common psychological make-up (Stalin's lexicon for "culture").

In determining the ethnicity of a group, one criterion may play a larger role than another, depending on the group's cultural proximity to the Chinese. In the case of the Mongols, for example, the mode of production, including the nature of economic enterprise and class structures, pivotal in the Marxist binary thesis of base and superstructure, has been deemed by both Mongols and Chinese of primary importance in demarcating Mongols from Chinese. Pastoralism, an economic practice adapted to the ecology of the grasslands and dating back to antiquity, became the ultimate cultural symbol defining the core of Mongol identity. The minzu-building project is simultaneously a purifying process, designed to make ethnic traits congruent with the qualities said to define Mongolness. In this process, other economic activities, such as agriculture, although long practiced by a large proportion of the Mongol population, including pastoralists, came to be associated with memories of Chinese colonization and thus was seen by Mongols as alien to Mongolness.

Chinese minzu management has a propensity to reify ethnic consciousness along lines specified in the minzu-building project. Minzu building is not just a state project; it is also, in this and many other instances, one that is embraced in diverse ways by the minzu subjects or fractions thereof. These amount to colonizing operations within a majoritarian Chinese society that is simultaneously colonizing minorities. The socialist "subjects," like *famü* (women) (Barlow 1994) or "nongmin" (peasantry) (Cohen 1993), constitute the constituencies for special citizen-forming projects that create categories that energize certain elements while suppressing others. Resistance and complicity of these groups with the state may produce a range of outcomes, including patronage and affirmative action, but also, alternatively, heavy-handed discrimination and even massacre.

Scholars, especially anthropologists, have documented some of the ways in which ethnicity and ethnic nationalism emerged with China's modern mode of governance, particularly classification and categorization of the citizens of China into 56 minzu or nationalities, which are further divided into two blocks, the majority Han and 55 ethnic minorities. In this new image of a multicultural China, the 56 being an invention of the People's Republic, we see ethnicity or perhaps deeply rooted manifestations of ethnicity working dialogically with the state's signifying machinery (Gladney 1991; Harrell 1995b; Litzinger 2000; Schlein 2000). We also glimpse the potential for ethnic minority conflict and challenges to the Chinese state. These researches depart from an earlier historical

and political science approach that viewed China as a nationalizing and assimilating regime (Dreyer 1976; Herberer 1989; Mackerras 1994).

So we have a theoretical and practical impasse between China's universalizing or nationalizing tendency and its particularizing practice. The latter tendency has caused alarm among China's leaders and outside analysts, especially following the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the Soviet national-territorial delimitation demonstrated its efficacy in serving as foundations for new nation-states.

Such alarmism is not confined to China. In much of today's world there is an outcry against the rise of a new "tribalism" that either brings down a multinational state or demands the right to express ethnic identities. Primordial ethnonationalism, which is another name for the new tribalism, is pitted against the merits of a civic empire. There is thus nostalgia in many quarters for "national unity" and repeated denunciation of any continued struggle for ethnonational liberation as "racism" wedded to primordialism. In progressive scholarly circles, the controversies are often couched in terms of civic nationalism versus ethnic nationalism or citizenship versus ethnic rights (cf. Couture et al. 1998, Kymlicka and Norman 2000).

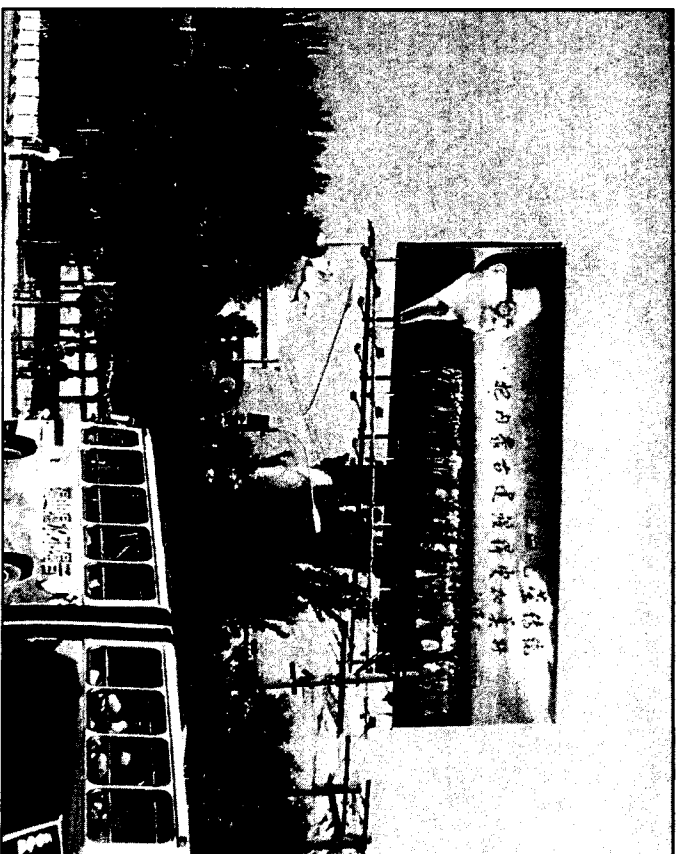
Eric Hobsbawm, for instance, sees no value in post-1945 nationalisms, treating all of them as regressive, as "ethnic." Nationalism today, in his view, no longer contributes to "nation-building" in any progressive sense. "It is no longer, as it were, a global political program, as it may be said to have been in the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries. It is at most a complicating factor, or a catalyst for other developments" (1990: 181). Similarly, most postcolonial scholarship treats all nationalisms, even anticolonial nationalisms, as elite bourgeois nationalist ideologies. Tim Brennan observes of the Western criticism of nationalism in Third World countries that Western critics have shown a "conveniently European lapse of memory" (1990: 57). Praising early European nationalism as modernizing, unifying, and democratizing, they denounce Third World nationalisms as reactionary, anarchic, and irrational. "The terms of nationalism have from the European perspective apparently reversed. Not freedom from tyranny, but the embodiment of tyranny. The question is: how much is this new perspective a result of owning, rather than suffering, an empire? That is, can't it be said that the recoiling from nationalism is also partly due to the challenge of the rising national movements of the developing world?" asks Brennan forcefully (1990: 57). Here, I do not mean to endorse ethnic nationalism, but following Brennan, only propose to question this unabashed "lapse of memory" as applied to the Chinese context.

With regard to China, I argue, these two perspectives are as much a reflection of Western intellectual paradigm shift in studies of ethnicity and nationalism as a reflection of Chinese authorities' shifting attitude toward minorities. International scholars widely recognized Chinese minority policies as assimilationist during the 1960s and 1970s, but it is often debated whether China still openly

practices such a policy today. Does this mean that the Chinese regime has given up its assimilationist ambitions in favor of a more tolerant approach, granting greater autonomy to its minorities, or is it rather a strategic adjustment for its own survival? Is China a minzu-builder or a minzu-destroyer? Are these indeed mutually exclusive? How should we understand the condition of the minorities and their assertion of difference, as well as the regime's repeated denunciation of so-called national splitism (*minzu fenlie zhuyi*), even within the new official ideology of multiculturalism (*duoyuan wenhua*) as advocated by China's preeminent anthropologist Fei Xiaotong (1989)? What is minzu tuanjie, a banner that has been hoisted high in recent decades?

Important dimensions of the Chinese management of diversity are embodied in a unique expression, "minzu tuanjie," which can mean both "national unity" and "amity between nationalities" (minzu). One can visualize minzu tuanjie in diverse forms. Casual visitors to a frontier minority region cannot but be struck by the contrived friendship between nationalities that is officially trumpeted on every important occasion and even on a daily basis. To demonstrate certain contemporary dimensions of minzu tuanjie, let us journey to Hohhot, the capital city of Inner Mongolia. At the turn of the twenty-first century Hohhot is a bustling city, with a motorway interchange popularly nicknamed "Xinjiapo" (a Mandarin version of Singapore, but in this context, meaning "newly added hill," a pun deriding its uselessness), running through the middle of town. It carries a few cars, blocks large sections of road, and destroys the businesses along the street below, through which it has been built, much like the thruways through some American cities. In the middle of "City-Heart Park," in front of the landmark Inner Mongolian Museum, with its flying horse facing south toward China (rather than toward the North, the trope for the Republic of Mongolia, hence "national splitism"), a gigantic billboard towers over the square, depicting Party General-Secretary Jiang Zemin overseeing a line of joyous Chinese, Mongols, and other minorities in Inner Mongolia and admonishing them to unite in order to build a more beautiful Inner Mongolia. The Inner Mongolia Museum displays an exhibition of minzu tuanjie that was mounted in 1997 on the occasion of Inner Mongolia's fiftieth anniversary. It chronicles the friendship of the Mongols and Chinese and their common effort to build a prosperous Inner Mongolia and China. The foundation for these achievements is said to have been laid by Ulanhu, a communist who was Inner Mongolia's paramount leader and China's highest ranking minority official from 1947 to 1966, and who served as China's vice president in the 1980s.

As the chapters in this book demonstrate, minzu tuanjie is a hegemonic management device to maneuver in the context of China's diversity. It is also a way to talk about nationality relationships, a statement about the state's desire to achieve its goal—that is, the homogenization of the Chinese nation-landscape. Gramsci's notion of hegemony is generally understood as political and cultural domination and popular acceptance of ideologies of domination. William Rose-



1.1. Jiang Zemin Overseeing Minzu Tuanjie in Hohhot (2000)

berry, extending Gramsci, suggests that we "explore hegemony not as a finished and monolithic ideological formation but as a problematic, contested, political process of domination and struggle (1996: 77, original emphasis). He further argues that formations of particular regional, religious, ethnic, national, or class communities and identities involve languages of contention and opposition to other groups that vie for dominance. We can examine minzu tuanjie as such a two-way process of community and contention in a situation whose outcomes are not predetermined.

Minzu tuanjie as a trope for national unity is often set against an antithesis—minzu fenlie (national splitism or secessionism). It is based on the premise that tuanjie ("unity") is a guarantee of stability, whereas fenlie ("split") leads to instability and disorder. Thus, there is always a power relation imbedded in minzu tuanjie—that is, insofar as it is meant to uphold the welfare of a wider community at the expense of a smaller one, tuanjie implies a coercive unity. As a reaction to "splitism," we can understand minzu tuanjie as the state's hegemonic *and* contentious rhetoric.

Let me state at the risk of refraction that there are two basic positions, one represented by the state and the other by national minorities. If, from the national minority point of view, their demand for greater autonomy is under-



1.2. The Inner Mongolian Museum with a Horse atop, Galloping Southward (2000)

stood as a plea for acceptance of a more diverse China, one that grants equality to minorities, guaranteeing their cultural dignity and difference, the counterargument from the majoritarian state is that such demands threaten minzu tuanjie and are in effect minzu fenlie. The subtext is that the demand for greater autonomy and rights is either the demand of a handful (*yi xiao zuo*) of reactionaries of a minzu, or it is instigated by the imperialists in order to undermine China's sovereignty.

It is interesting to note here that while the majoritarian state refuses to reify minorities as unitary autonomy-seeking agents by insisting on the diverse interests within them, the Chinese national community is always set against a devilish imperialist Other, which is in fact no less than the rest of humanity. And then, of course, the best interests of the national minorities are said to lie in upholding minzu tuanjie and resolutely fighting against minzu fenlie, instigated from within and without. Under such sloganeering and "policymaking," draconian measures may be taken to punish minzu fenlie elements in the name of patriotism. Minzu tuanjie is thus not only a fat accomplice masqueraded as the best possible human condition, a basic human desire (for stability and harmony), but also a magic wand to stave off all challenges. Minority demands for autonomy are thus simultaneously rendered perverse, futile, and jeopardizing (to use

Hirschman's [1991] insightful phrases), both to the minority and to the Chinese nation.

As noted previously, the Chinese state is fond of portraying national unity, with all nationalities basking in the happy moment with the "leader," be it Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, or Jiang Zemin. The language used for all these incarnations of minzu tuanjie invariably expresses "familial" relationships, in which the various minority nationalities are younger siblings of the elder brother Chinese. But what has been glossed over in these happy and familial slogans and exhibits? And what are the historical processes that have led to the representation of Inner Mongolia as a hospitable land, welcoming friends from near and far? In front of the Hohhot municipality building stands a gigantic statue of a Mongol woman-cum-hostess holding a ritual scarf and a wine cup in her "left" hand (ritually incorrect) to welcome guests—Chinese guests, of course. This is ironic in a city in which the Chinese population is 90 percent of the total. Anthropologist William Jankowiak (1993) calls Hohhot a "Chinese City," perhaps rightly so.

The huge gap between official ideology and social and political reality is characteristic of many multinational and polyethnic states, in which official ideology regularly invokes harmony regardless of the extent of oppression of nationalities. Michael Herzfeld writes that "the formal operations of national states depend on coexistence—usually inconvenient, always uneasy—with various realizations of cultural intimacy . . . a government may try to co-opt the language of intimacy for its ultrarian ends of commanding loyalty under what seem to be the most unpropitious conditions. Indeed, in the face of globalizing processes, defensive domesticity can acquire a persuasive appeal" (1997: 4). The transnational Mongols are thus domesticated through minzu tuanjie, the poetics of which being often literally expressed in physical intimacy, in the marital union, monumentalized in the statues and exhibits of Huhanye and Wang Zhaojun, an ancient Xiongnu emperor and a Han dynasty courier sent to marry him in order to secure peace for the Han dynasty, memorialized in suburban Hohhot. Chinese national unity is expressed in an "irresistible romance" between Mongols, purportedly the metaphorical and genealogical descendants of the Xiongnu, and Chinese (Sommer 1990; see chapter 3; for a recent reincarnation of the theme in the international arena, see the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*).

Minzu tuanjie can perhaps be understood as an official nationalism. "'Official nationalisms,'" writes Benedict Anderson, "can best be understood as a means of combining naturalization with retention of dynastic power, in particular over the huge polyglot domains accumulated since the Middle Ages, or to put it another way, for stretching the short, tight skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire" (1991: 86). According to Anderson, official nationalisms seek to weld two opposing political orders, one national and another imperial or dynastic. What is more interesting, while nationalism developed out of empires, official nationalism "developed after and in reaction to" nationalist movements. Therefore, official nationalism, which initially recognizes diversity, seeks to



defuse the centrifugal tendency of that diversity by imposing a uniform culture, as in the case of Magyarization of Slovaks in Hungary or Japanization of Koreans under colonial rule. Similarly, in the case of China, we observe attempts at sinicization of all the groups that happen to fall within the territorial confines of the People's Republic, which combines the imperial and national political orders in one. Such an official nationalism, Anderson contends, constitutes a kind of "imperialism" to the peripheral peoples it embraces.

Here I find Stevan Harrell's discussion of sinicization germane. In "The Role of the Periphery in Chinese Nationalism" (1999), Harrell identifies the imperialist dimension of Chinese official nationalism in relation to the peripheral national minorities. He examines two processes of inclusion of the peripheries in Chinese discourse. In addition to providing justification for "the *fats accompli* of *Realpolitik*," Chinese nationalism also sets itself the task of including the peripheral territories and peoples of Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang: "Without the criteria of inclusion for those areas that during the Qing were in the middle ground of the scale of literization, and are now among the peripheries to be included in the integral nation," writes Harrell, "the nationalist projects so important to all Chinese governments in the 20th century somehow lose their vital force" (1999: 138–39). Twentieth-century Chinese state nationalism is thus energized by its desire to incorporate the peripheral areas into the Chinese nation, and various criteria have been designed to stretch the short, tight skin of the "Chinese" nation over the gigantic body of the empire, which constitutes many different groups with diverse cultures, by means of cultural, linguistic, genealogical, racial, historical, and political appeals to loyalty. All these appeals are to identify common ground for a Chinese nation that can be simultaneously unified and defended against "foreigners."

Where, then, is the place for national minorities in a regime of official nationalism-cum-imperialism or *minzu tuanjie*? Can there be a "minority discourse" as endorsed by most postcolonial scholars? "Minority discourse," according to Homi Bhabha, the doyen of postcoloniality, "acknowledges the status of national culture—and the people—as a contentious, performative space" (1994b: 157). This formulation takes national culture and the people as moral authority and looks to the postcolonial struggle for the rights of the fragments of the nation (Charterjee 1993) to rescue "History" from the nation (Duara 1995). Similarly, attempts to dislodge the patriarchal monopoly of the nation, as many feminist scholars contend, are predicated on the goodness of the national culture or the people, lending them a moral authority. But what is the "national culture" and who are "the people" in China?

As noted previously, in recent years Chinese ethnicity has become a legitimate field of academic inquiry. Not only are minorities seen as constructed by the state, but the hitherto unchallenged "Chinese" is also increasingly perceived as a category that is constructed. Specialists increasingly use the indigenous ethnonym "Han," rather than "Chinese," to denote the majority nationality in

China. Historians of the Qing empire trace the emergence of the term "Han ethnic identity" to the Qing classificatory system, which divided the population into Manchu, Mongol, Tibetan, Han, and Hui (Millward 1998; Crossley 1990, 1999; Elliott 2001). According to Dru Gladney (1991), Han as an ethnic category was invented by Sun Zhongshan in the early years of the twentieth century for the purpose of rallying Chinese nationalism to unify the broadest possible support against the Manchus, who then ruled China. Of course, the canopy of "Han" disguises a plethora of identities, such as Hakkas, Minnan, Cantonese, and other groups, who now begin to reassert their identity yet have no place within the category of the fifty-six nationalities. Emily Honig's study of the Subei people in Shanghai indicates the fluidity of term "the Han," arguing compellingly that "native place identity may become the basis of identities and relationships that are as ethnic in the context of China as African American, Italian American, or Chicano identities are ethnic in the United States" (1996: 143). Edward Friedman (1995) raised the scenario of a split between North China and South China, due to increasing economic, cultural, and political disparity caused by the introduction of the market economy, thereby pointing to the instrumentality, rather than the primordialism, of the Han. This is corroborated by the emergence of Taiwanese identity based on Minnanese and Hakka hybridized with the Taiwan aboriginals, in contrast and often in opposition to the Han, the latter the umbrella term now used to designate the mainland Chinese (*wai sheng ren*) (Ren 1996).

This awareness of the multiple ethnicities concealed within the rubric Han allows one to highlight the asymmetrical power relations of "ethnicity" in various local contexts. It is also an intervention that seeks to rescue the Han from the Chinese state (*Zhongguo*), reserving the latter as a term to convey a civic supra-ethnic domain. This is hardly a unique situation but rather is characteristic of many national states struggling to maintain unity in the midst of cultural diversity and ethnic conflict. The equation of Hindu and India—for example, in understanding the meaning of India—is critical for grasping the dynamics that led to the partition of India and continues to reverberate half a century later, defying efforts to accommodate non-Hindu minorities, notably a large Muslim population and many groups that the Indian state classifies as tribes (Ludden 1996: 4–8). In the Soviet Union, a neutral nonethnic term, "Soviet people," was used to defuse Russification, but it could not prevent the break-up of the Soviet Union. In order to foster a nonethnic civic federation of post-Soviet Russia, an ethnically neutral term, "Rossia" (instead of Russia), has been suggested (Balzer 1999; Tishkov 1997). In this sense, the use of Han, instead of "Chinese," is part of the search for solutions to China's nationality problems.

However, I remain unconvinced of the civic dimension of the term "Chinese" (Zhongguo, Zhonghua), for centuries of historical baggage cannot be defined away simply by separation of ethnic Han from nonethnic Chinese. In fact, the notion of Chinese Nation (Zhonghua Minzu) as an inclusive concept presumes

the "Han" as its core and is deeply infected by racism. As the early nationalist debates for naming the post-Qing new Republic "Zhonghua Minguo" indicate, the name was a combination of a republican ideal with the restoration of "Zhonghua" as opposed to *Dalu*, the barbarians. According to Shen Sung-chiao (1997), even the inclusivist notion of *Da Minzu Zhuyi*, or "Great Nationalism," as advocated by Liang Qichao and later adopted by Sun Zhongshan, which embraced the unity of Han, Manchu, Mongol, Tibetans, and Muslims (*wuzu gonghe*), centered on the assimilation (*tonghua*) of other nationalities into the Han. It should be further noted that so-called China, also known as the Middle Kingdom (Zhongguo), was never an official name. The two Chinese states that exist today, despite their ideological differences, both call themselves Zhonghua: Zhonghua Minguo (the Republic of China) and Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo (the People's Republic of China). The Middle (Zhong) is always hyphenated with "Hua," a term reserved exclusively for the Han. It is this inseparability of Han or Hua from "China" that makes minority identification with China so ambivalent or difficult. In English, we can write Han Chinese, but it is impossible to hyphenate other nationalities with Chinese. Mongol Chinese or Tibetan Chinese are impossibilities (cf. Gladney 1991 and Lipman 1996 for discussions of hyphenating Muslims with Chinese; see chapter 5 for the hyphenated Daur-Mongol identity). In this book I will continue to use the English word Chinese to designate the "Han" in contrast to Mongol—mindful, though, of the tensions, as well as of the peculiarly constructed concept of "Han."

Ethnic or cultural diversity in China is rather different from multicultural Euro-America and even from the former Soviet Union, and these differences—historical, institutional, and cultural—account for different responses from minority peoples to the state and vice versa. Perhaps it is useful to make a distinction between a multinational state and a polyethnic state, as Will Kymlicka (1995) argues. Kymlicka distinguishes two broad patterns of cultural diversity that are related to the history of nation-building. "In the first instance, cultural diversity arises from the incorporation of previously self-governing, territorially concentrated cultures into a larger state." He calls the incorporated cultures "national minorities." "In the second case, cultural diversity arises from individual and familial immigration." He calls the loose associations into which such immigrants often coalesce "ethnic groups." This distinction is important, for the two kinds of groups are likely to have different aspirations and expectations pertaining to the state. Whereas national minorities "typically wish to maintain themselves as distinct societies alongside the majority culture, and demand various forms of autonomy or self-government to ensure their survival as distinct societies," ethnic groups "typically wish to integrate into the larger society, and to be accepted as full members of it" (1995: 10–11). These two are, of course, ideal types. Nonterritorial groups, like Jews everywhere and Turks in Germany, may also wish to preserve significant elements of their culture, even as they seek to claim citizenship, and (some) may wish to assimilate as well.

In China, most of the pertinent groups are territorial "national minorities," although they have long been associated with China. It is indisputable that the long history of China's nation-building and the incorporation of far-flung groups such as Mongols, Uygurs, and Tibetans by the time of the Republic of China (1912–1949) or earlier make them "national minorities." Indeed, the CCP's notion of minzu for nationalities contains an explicit dimension of territoriality and political autonomy. Instead of thinking only in terms of the state's benevolence in granting territorial homeland to the newly classified minorities, however, I would also argue that it is the historic struggles for independence on the part of non-Chinese nationalities such as Mongols that resulted in different levels of territorially based administrative autonomous units (see chapters 4 and 5). Of course, the ethnic picture is more complex than presented here. Some minzuz, such as the Hui, are scattered all over China, although some also live in compact communities like the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. And others, such as Hakka, Cantonese, or Minnanese, by virtue of distinct historical and cultural features, might qualify for non-Chinese identity, but they have not been designated as nationalities or minzu. While some groups number tens of millions, others such as Orochon number only several thousand. Nevertheless, historical and political processes determine that where national minorities form compact territorial communities, especially along China's borderlands, the Chinese state has relentlessly encouraged settlement by Chinese migrants so as to outnumber the native populations. This achieves two purposes simultaneously: "integration" of the frontier regions into China and a release of population pressures in agrarian China. China's frontiers have been conquered by outright military occupation, as in the case of Tibet and Xinjiang, or combined with communist ideological unity and promises for territorial autonomy, as in the Inner Mongolian case.

In a multinational state like China (as distinct from a polyethnic state), in which "the core nation is understood as the legitimate 'owner' of the state, which is conceived as the state of and for the core nation," (Brubaker 1996: 5, original emphasis) and in which national minorities may have their own tangible or imaginary homelands outside the nationalizing state, the struggle cannot always take the form of a "minority discourse." In the case of minzu tuanjie and minzu fenlie, the national state's moral authority has repeatedly been called into question. This has not only been done by the Mongols, Tibetans, and Uygurs who have challenged the Chinese national state at various times during the twentieth century, with varying degrees of intensity, but also by the Chinese state's repeated denunciations, tarring demands for equality and autonomy with the brush of external imperialism.

In this regard, Edward Said's (1979, 1997) study of Zionism and the Palestinian question is instructive. He discusses the Palestinian question in relation to the narratives of Zionism, tracing what he calls the self-consciousness of Palestinian experience to the first Zionist settlements of the 1880s. He studies Zion-

ism's contradictory lineage—the colonial provenance of Zionism's emancipatory ideals; inversions of the roles of oppressors and victims, militarists and refugees as manifested in the baffling displacements of the Palestinians. And yet any social criticism of the Jews in the West is invariably equated with anti-Semitism, leading to invocation of Jewish suffering in history. Thus, Said underlines the global and colonial dimensions of the Palestinian question. The imbrication of colonization and emancipation in Zionism escapes the "national" attempt to see it as an "internal affair."

Similarly, the Chinese communist emancipatory ideal often blends with Chinese racism. The international dimension of the Mongols, Tibetans, and Uyghurs and their geopolitical location at the borderlands of China suggest the reason for the intensity of Chinese sloganeering of *minzu tuanjie* and *minzu fenlie*. National unity is most vulnerable precisely at the borderlands. "Borders," write Donnan and Wilson, "are signs of the sovereignty and domain of the state, and are markers of the peaceful or hostile relations between a state and its neighbors" (1999: 15). The territoriality of the geopolitical borderlands sets them apart from the similar tropes used in postmodernist scholarship that celebrate border crossings (Gupta and Ferguson 1992). However, fragmented identities and hybridity produced at the borderlands are not always happy, nor are they necessarily signs of liberation in a new synthesis, as Gupta and Ferguson contend. Rather, hybrids produced by competing national power contentions may often give rise to a cultural, moral, and political predicament (Bulag 1998; Donnan and Wilson 1999: 39–40). Hybrids at the geopolitical borderlands are people upon whose bodies and consciousness national states map their power, often in contradictory or antagonistic ways.

Recognizing the diverse historical, political, cultural, and territorial aspects of the Mongols, Tibetans, and Uyghurs would allow us to identify some of their aspirations, which may be distinct not only from one another but particularly from those of other nonterritorially based groups. It is quite apparent that without this distinction, implementation of strategies supportive of the interests of one type of group can be detrimental to the interests of another. In other words, some international academics or human rights activists seeking to intervene on behalf of "ethnic minorities," assuming that their best interests lie in integration through gaining equality, might seriously misread the goals of "national minorities," whose attitude to the state may be far more ambivalent. This is not to say that national minorities do not fight for equality and justice within a national state. Rather, I argue that if a particular national minority manifests characteristics of "ethnic group" aspiration, wishing "to integrate into the larger society and to be accepted as full members of it," we should seek to understand the mechanisms and processes of this outcome, as I attempt to do throughout this book with respect to the Mongols. Nor does it mean that Mongols do not aspire to get along with other nationalities, including the Chinese. Indeed, their ver-

sion of *minzu tuanjie* calls for amity between different nationalities, based on equality and respect for differences.

*Minzu* highlights central contradictions of Chinese socialist nation-building. *Minzu* is to be constructed for the ultimate purpose of its destruction—that is, the destruction of differences among the *minzu* will pave the way for the elimination of *minzu* as policy. Having made its contribution to Chinese national unity and economic development, its mission is complete. Although the state's leading propaganda journal on minorities still retains its original Chinese name, *Minzu Tuanjie*, it is notable that in 1995 the English translation was changed from "Nationality Unity" to "Ethnic Unity," "ethnic" connoting more of a nonpolitical, cultural character. The Chinese state has devoted substantial resources to build up *minzu* regional autonomy and solidarity it through affirmative action, while at the same time busying itself by devoting commensurate energy to "solving the nationality problem" (*jiejue minzu wenti*) in ways that ultimately assume assimilating minorities into the Chinese Nation, politically and culturally.

Deng Xiaoping's reform project, and that advanced by his successor Jiang Zemin, promotes a multiculturalism that constitutes not socialist subjects but Chinese subjects. Minorities are evaluated by meritocratic criteria—in other words, their service and contribution to the Chinese Nation. Unlike the worker subject who is forever dreaming of resuming center stage or attaining some kind of autonomy from the state, but who nevertheless constitutes the national citizenry (if at present a powerless "national citizenry" facing unemployment), minority *minzu* has only two options for the time being: it becomes a foil to the Chinese national state, displayed in the human zoo theme park to illustrate China's colorful image of *minzu tuanjie*, or it becomes the antithesis of the Chinese, serving to unite the Chinese, as reflected in the denunciation and suppression of minority *minzu fenlie* of recent years.

This condition gives rise to conflicting strategies on the part of different national minorities, some emphasizing individual rights, some collective rights, and yet others opting to "exit," in Hirschman's sense (1970). What characterizes the Mongol situation is that these strategies are often simultaneously pursued by different sections of the Mongol population. The tricky question is how Mongol demands to fulfill the promise of *minzu tuanjie*, in the form of equality and diversity, as well as amity among different *minzu*, ineluctably intertwine with the Chinese state's version of *minzu tuanjie* for homogeneity in the service of national unity. We may even pose a futuristic question, however remote and quixotic it may appear: How can we construct an ethnopolitics in which democracy, civil rights, representation, and equality need not hinge on the moral authority of the "Chinese Nation"?

#### A PREVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

In contrast with many studies that are mainly concerned with "cultural politics" such as ethnic identity and/or ethnic representation, this book locates the Mon-