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9. *National Histories and World Systems: Writing Japan, France, and the United States*

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Cultural historians typically term the late nineteenth century the age of nationalism. Historians of historiography, when they have been sensitive to the eras in which historical works have been produced, no less typically see the efflorescence of "national history" during this period as a reflection of the nationalistic climate of the age. In such a view, the writing of history at this political and intellectual turning point served mainly to create a past for a new thing called the nation-state, to make this new thing old. Thus the argument is that the writing of national history naturalizes the "nation" as a form of community and thereby naturalizes the nation-state as a political organization.

The contention of this paper is that such interpretations of the practice of national history take the nation-state out of the world.[1] Certainly the argument that national history naturalizes the nation-state by giving it a history is a great advance over the perspective of national history itself, which pretends to write the history of something that exists from time immemorial. This level of critique brings into question the apparently natural status of the nation and thus also that of the nation-state, the nation's apparently organic political manifestation. The critique gives a history not to the nation and the nation-state, but to the *ideas* of nation and nation-state: they lose their status as fixed categories and are thrust into time. A question remains, however: what about the *space* that the nation-state claims for itself? Does this claiming, too, have historical determinants? The naturalizing gaze of national history operates not only in time but also in space. It devises historical legitimations for the territorial claims of specific nations, but even more importantly devises legitimations for the territoriality of the nation-state in general. This form of territoriality, in which juridical, economic, and social space are made to share the same frontiers, is essential to the temporal operations of national history. National history always is staged in a retrospectively claimed space.

The spatial claims of national history have largely escaped the type of paradigmatic critique that has revealed so clearly the politics of its operations

in time. Scholars have examined specific issues, such as the status of areas around the Rhine in nineteenth century French historiography, but only since the rise of postcolonial historiography have the spatial operations of national history emerged as a general problem. These operations are geopolitical in nature, not limited to the political situation in one nation-state but rather responding to the aggregate of relations within the political and economic system of nation-states on a global scale. Indeed, by neglecting the geopolitical context in which the nation-state was established as the universal political and economic form of modernity—that is, by examining the writing of national history only in a national context—the critique of national history risks unwittingly re-naturalizing what it sets out to study. It risks naturalizing the nation as the universal category of historical writing by accepting the nation-state's claims to space.

If we examine the practice of national history in the late nineteenth century in its global geopolitical context, we can see that "national history" served not only the nation-state but more broadly served the ideological articulation of world capitalism, at a time when the market rapidly was being consolidated through the division of the world into discrete nation-states and colonies. During this period the writing of national history did naturalize the nation-state as a political and economic form. It did not do so, however, simply by creating a past for the nation. The practice of national history also articulated the relationship of that new form of territory, the nation-state, to the world. It did so by establishing a particular sort of epistemological space that I call the space of national history. This space, inside of which national history unfolds, exists in apposite relation to other such spaces: defined by its difference from them, a difference that is established through the mediation of the matrix of national-historical spaces as a whole. According to the totalizing gesture of this perspective, no territory is without its national history. If it lacks such a history then the territory properly belongs to another nation that can give it one. In this view, geopolitics thus can be understood as the sum of all separate national histories. The territory of the nation-state emerges as the common-sense division of space, not only in the present but also in the past, where the latent unity of national space awaits the national subject that will make it manifest.

Even such a cursory analysis of the spatial operations of "national history" suggests that the major challenge national history faces is to manage the relationship of national space to that of the world. The further critique of the writing of national history thus requires that we adopt a perspective broader than that of single nation-states, in order to account for the ways in which national space always is embedded in supra-national systems. In what follows, I examine the articulation of the space of national history through examples drawn from three countries that experienced what could be called spatial "upheavals" in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Japan, the United States, and France. While other examples would be possible (notably that of Germany), these three countries offer a range of positions in the world and thus suggest the ways in which the writing of national history was punctuated by global asymmetries even as it responded to the general grammar of the system of nation-states. In the case of Japan, I examine a peripheral state that only had been integrated into the capitalist market in the 1850s; in the United States, an expanding settler colony, no less peripheral at the time, that was commencing rapid industrialization, and in France a metropolitan power that just had suffered a great setback on the Continent but which soon began pouring resources into the development of an empire.

My entry into the problem is the intersection in the late nineteenth century between liberal economic thought—which in its treatment of international trade offered widely accepted arguments on the relation of one national space to another—and the rhetoric that historians and social theorists used to describe the process of national development. From this point of view, the names of my examples are Fukuzawa Yukichi, Frederick Jackson Turner, and Paul Leroy-Beaulieu. The interplay between economic liberalism and the rhetoric of national history is only one way into the issue. Considering that the period with which I am concerned saw not only the rise of nationalism and the efflux of national history but also a shift in world political economy from free-trade imperialism to formal empires, however, it seems an appropriate approach. My examples in fact indicate that the latter transition was as important a turning point in historiography as the two former.

One methodological point needs to be clarified before proceeding. The perspective of what follows is not "comparative" if comparison means juxtaposing two or more objects considered to exist *prior* to the comparison itself. This sort of comparison would seek general conclusions about the writing of national history by observing parallels and divergences among native "Japanese," "American," and "French" traditions, each assumed to have some sort of organic relationship to local religion, literature, philosophy, and the other things usually subsumed under the category of "culture." If one accepts that national history emerged to articulate the relationship of the nation-state to a supra-national system (whether or not one agrees with the details of Immanuel Wallerstein's theory, for example) then such a comparative approach clearly is inappropriate to the issue at hand. The reason is that it reproduces a central tenet of national ideology itself, namely that cultural unities called nations objectively exist and exert a determining sway over the mental lives of the subjects of nation-states. To avoid this pitfall we must examine the writing of national history in these three cases in the context of their relationship to one another, a relationship that we must recognize as mediated through geopolitics as a whole. In other words, we must approach the practice of national history from a systemic as well as a local perspective. The influence of local textual genealogies, while important, must be considered subordinate to the common problems faced by the intellectuals involved in the production of ideology, and these problems stem from the reorganization of the world into a system of nation-states. To avoid the grandiose adjective "global," I would call this approach international or transnational.

Before examining the role of the rhetoric of economic liberalism in historical writing in my three countries I want to look briefly at the use of this rhetoric within liberalism itself. The rhetorical techniques that become essen-

tial to historical writing in the late nineteenth century emerge from a style of talking about social development that proposes something called the division of labor as a model of social relations. The division of labor in turn has exchange as its basis. In this method of representing society, exchange is more than an economic activity. It is both the condition for the institution of society and the means by which it develops. As such, it becomes the fundamental mode of intersubjective relations. Consequently, anything that aids exchange between individuals (in the typical example, roads) aids the constitution and advancement of society as a whole. By the same token anything that impedes exchange (tolls) threatens society at the most fundamental level.

Such a promotion of free exchange as a social good—the idea of exchange being essential to the notion of "society" itself—appeared before liberalism in mercantilism's treatment of domestic economic policy and was prominent in the work of the physiocrats.[2] I take Adam Smith, however, as my example of this problematic for several reasons. One is the simple fact of Smith's prominence as a point of reference in economic discourse in the late nineteenth century. Another whose import will be clear later is the fundamental departure in Book One of *The Wealth of Nations* from previous considerations of the causes of economic specialization. As Pierre Rosanvallon has pointed out, Smith's innovation in this area was to posit the division of labor as the *consequence* of exchange, rather than the reverse.[3] Instead of seeing *exchange* as a necessity created by *specialization*—by a guild system, for example—Smith argued that specialization resulted from the opportunities offered by what he famously called "the propensity to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another."[4]

With exchange thus established as the founding social act, the division of labor becomes a thoroughly dynamic way of conceiving social relations. Anything that aids intersubjective exchange deepens the division of labor, and the structural composition of society therefore is subject to positive change from moment to moment. At this point a theory of social development appears in Smith's thought—the unacknowledged philosophy of history of liberal and neoliberal economics, which could be called the "market imaginary of history." Smith observes on the one hand that the division of labor is limited by the extent of the market, and on the other that improvement and extension of networks of transportation and communication allow markets, and thus the division of labor, and thus society itself, to expand.[5] In this way Smith presents expanding trade, aided by improvements in transportation, as a mechanism for the integration of new territory into society. Smith calls such integration "civilization." We should note that in Smith's explicit statements, society inherently is something that expands. It does so by integrating new territory into its networks. The only limits to such expansion are the limitations of transportation and communication.

I would like to make clear that what is at stake here is not a straightforward "recognition" on Smith's part of the importance of the division of labor in social structures, but rather Smith's use of the division of labor as a philosophical concept for organizing social phenomena as knowledge.[6] Such an

epistemological function of the division of labor is clear in Smith's famous initial proposition in *The Wealth of Nations* of a factory—specifically a pin factory—as a model for "the general business of society." The advantage of examining a small and trivial example of the division of labor, Smith says, is that it may be "placed . . . under the view of the spectator" in its entirety.[7] Smith proposes the factory as a social metaphor. The value of the metaphor for him is that it allows observation. In turn it allows *representation*: it is through metaphors such as the factory, the division of labor, and exchange that Smith renders representable the thing called society. It is such an understanding of economic liberalism as a system of rhetoric, rather than as simply a theory of economics, that I want to apply to representations of national history.

I would like to consider now the use of this sort of rhetoric in a text called *Bunmeiron no gairyaku* (*Outline of a Theory of Civilization*) published in Japan in 1875 by Fukuzawa. The appearance of *Outline of a Theory of Civilization* marked a decisive shift in Japanese historical writing, which had been dominated by Neo-Confucianism for more than two centuries, and the appearance of a new genre of historical practice, *bunmeishi* or history of civilization.

The genre emerged as an attempt to create a Japanese past for *bunmei kaika*, a slogan usually translated as "civilization and enlightenment" that designated a diffuse project among intellectuals in the 1870s to use education to make modern worker-citizens out of a populace they regarded as ignorant and dominated by custom. At the time, optimism about the possibility of rapid social change and enthusiasm for European and American learning—which had been widespread among intellectuals since the last years of the Tokugawa shogunate in the 1860s—were giving way to pessimism about the force of social habit and to concern that a vogue for superficial "Westernization" would have malign effects on the people. In the face of these changing sentiments, the genre of history of civilization elaborated a view of social change as a long-term process extending into the future and beginning in the Japanese past. After the publication of *Outline of a Theory of Civilization* in 1875, the genre continued with *Nihon kaika shōshi* (*Short History of Japanese Civilization*), published from 1877 to 1882 by Taguchi Ukichi, a laissez-faire economist and one-time translator for the Finance Ministry. The following years saw the appearance of a host of histories of civilization, but the genre began to wane with the anti-liberal reaction of the mid-1880s and was displaced decisively by Rankean academic historiography in the 1890s. Histories of civilization now are regarded dubiously as the obsolete foundation of modern Japanese historiography.

To elaborate their view of civilization as a process of endogenous, national social change, the writers of histories of civilization appropriated the work of several liberal European historians, in particular François Guizot and Thomas Buckle, of liberal political economists including J. S. Mill and Francis Wayland, and of the laissez-faire social theorist Herbert Spencer. The theoretical borrowing has been documented at great length.[8] What I am con-

cerned with here is not the theory but the rhetoric that Fukuzawa and other intellectuals took from these Western sources. It is in the rhetoric of the genre that the liberal historical imaginary that I have associated with Adam Smith emerges as an important technique of representation.

The rhetoric of histories of civilization is dominated by a constellation of related words that appear throughout the genre. The words include *kōtsū*, communication or concourse; *tsūkō*, transit, passage; *kōeki*, trade or barter; *kōkan*, exchange or swap, and most importantly, *kōsai*, relations, communication, or intercourse. All of these terms include a Chinese character (read as *kō—majiwaru* in a Japanese reading) whose most basic meaning is mixing or association, and a second character signifying circulation or exchange in some form. What defines histories of civilization as a genre of historical knowledge is an evangelical desire to explain all aspects of society, from the economic to the intellectual and political, as manifestations of circulation, exchange, and intercourse. Fukuzawa writes in *Outline of a Theory of Civilization*:

> The nature of humankind inherently is to associate with others. . . . As those in the world associate together and people come into contact with each other, their intercourse gradually widening and their laws gradually becoming regular, human sentiment gradually moderates and knowledge gradually unfolds. In English, *bunmei* is "civilization." It derives from the Latin *civitas* and thus means "country." Hence the word "civilization" describes the tendency toward successive improvement of human intercourse for the better, and in contrast to the independence of barbarian anarchy, means the formation of a country [*ikkoku*].[9]

While this passage clearly presents intercourse as an indiscriminate mechanism of civilization, the rhetoric of *Outline of a Theory of Civilization* and other histories of civilization in fact breaks down into two different "tropes"—on the one hand, an integrative trope of intercourse *within* a nation that recalls Adam Smith, and on the other, a differentiating trope of intercourse *between* nations. The distinction between the tropes is implicit: the texts offer no theoretical justification for the two quite different ways that they use the same constellation of words.

The first trope of integration within a nation already has raised its head in Fukuzawa's declaration that human nature is to associate in ever-widening circles. Fukuzawa also uses this trope to describe the formation of *shūron*, popular opinion, in Western countries. He writes, "Even in a remote village, people form circles and discuss public and private affairs. With these circles formed, each inevitably will have its own views. . . . This view and that view converge and change slightly, gradually merging and including more until finally the public opinion of the country is decided. . . ."[10] The state of unity that Fukuzawa describes here is achieved by overcoming barriers to communication in order to create an ever-widening space for the circulation of opinion. His insistence that a unified opinion necessarily results indicates that this

trope of intercourse also implies a converging self-recognition in which one recognizes one's interest in the interests of others.

In contrast, the second differentiating trope of intercourse in the representation of history in the genre implies the recognition of sharp distinctions between self and other. Nations, not citizens, are the agents here. The shift is clear in remarks that Fukuzawa makes on international relations in the closing chapter of *Outline of a Theory of Civilization*. Fukuzawa warns that "there are only two sorts of intercourse between country and country. In peacetime, buying and selling things and fighting each other over the profit; or when it comes to it, killing each other with weapons. In other words, today's world could be called one of trade and war."[11] Fukuzawa's phrasing shows that the nature of intercourse changes entirely when it takes place between states. The expansive integration that in Fukuzawa's general theory of social development is unlimited never proceeds beyond the territory of the nation-state and is superseded by an intercourse that by definition is antagonistic.

That the nation-state provides the frontier that literally lies between these tropes is clear in Fukuzawa's explanation of the existence of *kokutai*, a word that he uses to translate J. S. Mill's term "nationality." "Nationality," Fukuzawa says,

> means that a race [*isshuzoku*][12] of people gather together and share sorrows and joys, create differences between themselves and other nations, regard each other more warmly than they regard people of other nations, strive to expend their energies for each other rather than for people of other nations, govern themselves under a single government, resent suffering the control of other governments, [and] bear their calamities and happiness themselves in independence.[13]

Such rhetoric of self and other should leave little doubt that in the liberal theory of history propounded by histories of civilization, the two irreconcilable tropes of intercourse limn a figurative national space within which nations form and achieve independence. The boundary of this space is maintained simultaneously by the activities of integrative and differentiating intercourse. The fundamental activity of exchange thus institutes society, as it does in Smith, but in Fukuzawa's text it institutes society as *national*. Social development, which it is Fukuzawa's main concern to describe, takes place in a national space that is strictly separate from other national spaces existing in differential relationship to it. Here history is solely the history of national intercourse, an inherently unifying activity, while national subjects are the universal subjects of liberal political economy given a national purpose: the realization of independence.[14]

What the market imaginary of history finally accomplishes in the Japanese genre of history of civilization, then, is the establishment *on the global periphery* of the type of internal theory of social change that had played an essential legitimating role in the expansion of the economic and political

power of Europe since the sixteenth century. Scholars such as Samir Amin and Enrique Dussel have argued convincingly that the assertion in such theories that the power and wealth of Europe arose because of internal factors (such as Protestantism) which were "lacking" in other regions not only gave the imprimatur of history to metropolitan domination, but also served to justify the forcible imposition of European models of development on colonial (and more recently neocolonial) possessions. The key legitimating function of such internal paradigms was to efface the systemic factors that made European domination not only possible but at a certain point inevitable (in particular, the accumulation of capital at the metropole) and instead to blame the periphery for its own subjugation.[15] In appropriating such internal theories of social change, Fukuzawa and other writers of histories of civilization accepted what Dussel calls the "developmentalist fallacy." At the same time, however, they rearticulated these theories to represent development as a *national* project, relativizing the dominant position of Europe by insisting that the universalist pretensions of European social thought be taken at face value: Japan could and would achieve "civilization."

Two consequences must be observed before moving on to American and French examples. First, the interplay of tropes of intercourse in the genre formalizes in epistemology the organization of the world as a system of political-economic subjects known as nation-states that was being implemented at the time through the consolidation of the world market and the international state system. The nation-state becomes the universal political-economic form and the *telos* of all separate national histories. The insertion of Japan as a full, independent partner in this global political economy was to be accomplished by the project of "civilization and enlightenment." But as an extension of the same logic, histories of civilization situated enlightened Japanese intellectuals in the same relationship to the inhabitants of the archipelago as colonial administrators to their subjects. The agents of a coercive transformation of daily life to suit the needs of the nation-state, such intellectuals nonetheless were able to claim for themselves the legitimation of history and to maintain that they acted on behalf of the "nation."

The emergence of such a historiographical problematic therefore is not only an issue of the legitimation of inequities in "international" relations. It also is an issue of the production and reproduction of epistemological categories that support the enclosure and administration by nation-states of geographical areas and their populations. In the new nation-state of Japan, the genre of history of civilization was instrumental in the establishment of these categories. National history from this point of view is a category for enclosing a populace that henceforth will be the object of a civilizing process whose seeming subject is the nation rather than intellectuals and bureaucrats. Yet for all the apparent confidence of Fukuzawa and his confederates that the steamroller progress of civilization was unstoppable, the very premises of such a project dictate that any persistent internal division or heterogeneity be regarded as threatening the entire national endeavor.

Such heterogeneity in fact is the focus of the deployment of liberal economic rhetoric in the historical writing of Frederick Jackson Turner. Turner's famous 1893 essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" was one of the founding texts of Progressive history, the current that dominated the practice of history in the United States from the turn of the twentieth century to the Second World War.[16] While the name given to the movement was meant to indicate its political stance, not simply its enthusiasm for progress in the abstract, the national character that Turner and others attributed to progress was fundamental to their representation of history. On this point Turner had much in common with his contemporary Fukuzawa: as in Fukuzawa, Turner's early work seizes on exchange as a fundamental trope for representing social relations. The ideological challenge that Turner faced was, needless to say, greatly different. From the point of view of white intellectuals in the so-called Gilded Age, the unity of the people was the major problem facing the American settler colony. Like Fukuzawa, however, Turner approached this problem as one of space.

Like Japanese theories of civilization, social thought in the United States in Turner's era was concerned with the position of the United States in the world and with the relationship of national history to world history. The inquiry took place in the context of a long history of exceptionalism in American social thought, and specifically had to contend with the failure in the late nineteenth century of the strongly exceptionalist Jacksonian view of U.S. history. According to this view, current since the 1830s, the United States was exempt from the social ills observable in Europe because its abundance of land made possible a perpetual democracy based on a polity of small agrarian freeholders.[17] The United States would be exempt from the forces of social change because of the unique conditions that prevailed there. Underlying such a conception of U.S. society, then, was a profound antagonism toward time.

Since the 1870s this antihistorical view of the United States increasingly had been undermined by the appearance of what intellectuals euphemistically referred to as "complexity." By this they meant a host of phenomena that threatened the idealized Jacksonian nation, including industrialization—which brought with it a working class—and the influx of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe and Asia who looked and acted differently from the so-called "native stock" of Anglo-Germans. "Complexity" thus essentially meant social heterogeneity. Its persistence brought grudging acknowledgement that the United States was subject to the same forces that were changing Europe, and prompted efforts to view U.S. history in the light of universalistic theories based on the histories of European societies. Turner, for one, enthusiastically embraced liberal theories such as those of Achille Loria that postulated universal stages of social change.[18] Turner employed such theories to argue that the particular conditions prevailing in the expanding American settler colony were reflections of the universal.

According to the universalism that Turner espoused, all societies pass through successive economic stages as they evolve. The peculiarity of the United States was that a new instance of the universal process of social evolution began each time the frontier of settlement shifted west. Each of these separate processes of social evolution—he counted five—had a division of labor appropriate to its stage, while all were linked by the national system of

circulation that pushed the frontier westward as the system expanded. Social change in the nation as a whole thus moved in step with the extension of the networks through which intercourse took place. The prominence of these networks in Turner's representation of history is clear, for example, in his declaration that

> . . . civilization in American has followed the arteries made by geology, pouring an ever richer tide through them, until at last the slender paths of aboriginal intercourse have been broadened and interwoven into the complex maze of modern commercial lines; the wilderness has been interpenetrated by lines of civilization growing ever more numerous. It is like the steady growth of a complex nervous system for the originally simple, inert continent. If one would understand why we are to-day one nation, rather than a collection of isolated states, he must study this economic and social consolidation of the country.[19]

For Turner the penetration of the territory of the nation by highways, railroads, and so forth simply makes manifest a territorial unity that up to now has been latent: the integral territory of the nation exists prior to networks that *realize* it rather than create it.

The extension of the pathways of intercourse plays a more active role in the advent of the *people* in Turner's representation of history. According to Turner the extension of the networks of circulation constantly put immigrants in contact with the frontier, which itself was renewed without cease as settlement pushed westward. Discussions of Turner's "frontier thesis" typically stop with Turner's observations on the movement of the frontier, which he considered to have "closed" in 1890. Turner's description of what happens at the frontier, however, deserves a closer reading. He writes in "The Significance of the Frontier" that

> The frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanization. The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. . . . It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and moccasin. . . . Before long he has gone to planting Indian corn and plowing with a sharp stick; he shouts the war cry and takes the scalp in orthodox fashion.[20]

The label "Americanization" that Turner applies to the costume pageant that he describes taking place at the frontier was the common phrase of the era for the assimilation of immigrants. It therefore should be clear that in contrast to the common view of Turner as a historian concerned with the process of western settlement, the frontier thesis was closely engaged with contemporary alarm about the rise of so-called "complexity." In Turner's view the constant extension of networks of exchange, which transport the immigrant to an ever-fresh frontier and simultaneously knit the nation together, is essential to the reversal of such complexity. As the foundation of society, intercourse thus becomes inseparable from the genesis of the people, which takes place not in the past but in the present.

It is well known that Turner's essay gloomily predicts that with the frontier now closed such transformations of the people are impossible. The prophesy and indeed the thesis on which it was based had and have no foundation because even setting aside objections to Turner's exclusive focus on western regions, the frontier moved in more complex ways than Turner ever allowed. If we examine Turner's famous essay in light of the politics and economics of his time, however, we can see that by deploying the liberal rhetoric of intercourse Turner was able to represent the expropriation of western lands for capitalist agriculture, the rapid industrialization of the East, the reorganization of space by railroads, to wit, the vast economic change of the Gilded Age in its entirety, as a movement of "Americanization" in which the nation realizes its true character. Despite the fact that the phenomena Turner cites in the essay are economic ones, economics drops into the background and plays a minor role in what essentially is a drama of national awakening.

Although ostensibly concerned with the formation of citizens, what the drama of Americanization in Turner's early work naturalizes is the movement of capital. By attributing a national and indeed even popular quality to the expansion of the networks of capital, Turner claims—in the name of the "nation"—the territory of the nation-state as a space of free capitalist circulation. Obstacles to such free circulation appear in Turner's representation of history as threats to the integrity of the national space and thus to the life of the nation itself. Yet the major threat that Turner isolates in his essay is not, for example, the unequal relationship of the agricultural regions of the American South and West to the industrial and financial centers of the East, but rather the presence of unassimilated immigrants. The immigrant, indeed, emerges as a figure for the resistance to capitalism typified at the time by the Populist movement and labor agitation. Turner's national history, in contrast, posits the elimination of all such resistance as part of a positive narrative of unification and national rising.[21]

A comparison to Fukuzawa helps to illustrate what Turner accomplishes for national ideology in the United States. The genre of history of civilization articulated a position for the new Japanese nation-state in a radically changed world by outlining a space within which the nation would achieve unity and advance toward civilization. Although there were great regional differences within the new Japanese state, and although the status of the land and inhabitants of border areas such as Hokkaido and Okinawa was far from clear, myths such as the continuity of imperial rule gave the writers of these histories the means to assert that both the people and the territory of Japan were one and needed only to be made to advance through policies of "civilization and enlightenment." Turner, in contrast, wrote in a settler colony that always had been populated by immigrants, whose borders had not been stable since its establishment, and whose regions had deeply differing political and economic interests. In his case the ideological problem was not to create a history that explained the relationship of the nation to the "civilized"

states of Europe but to create a history that posited the conditions for the unification of the nation itself in both territory and populace. The frontier, as an ur-site of intercourse, served this purpose. In the United States the rhetoric of economic liberalism deployed in historical writing thus served greatly different ideological needs, even if the ultimate goal remained to represent national history as the genesis and growth of the people.[22]

Domestic politics and geopolitical position similarly inflected the ways in which the general tactic of representation that I call the market imaginary of history was used in debates on the state of the French nation in the 1870s, the third of my examples. Here at the industrialized center of the world economy tropes of intercourse, exchange, and circulation became privileged means for advancing arguments not on national genesis but on national regeneration. The preeminent work of colonialist propaganda in the early decades of the French Third Republic, *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes* (*On Colonization among Modern Peoples*) illustrates such a local focus on rebirth at the same time that it allows us to further examine the problem of frontiers in the establishment of national-historical space. Published in 1874 by Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, a young man soon to become the era's foremost liberal economist, this massive study of European colonialism was the touchstone of Jules Ferry's program for colonial expansion.[23] Analysis of the narrative of social development that Leroy-Beaulieu offers in it suggests an essential instability in the spatial suppositions of national history that is remedied only by the proposition of colonies as a type of supplemental historical space.

On Colonization was written in the wake of the founding traumas of the Third Republic, the defeat to Prussia in 1870 and the rise and suppression of the Commune in 1871. As a number of cultural historians have shown, the double shock of defeat abroad and civil war at home fostered a widespread meditation on national decadence and a reassessment of the course of French history since 1789.[24] A concern to find the means of national renewal surfaced at the same time. While statements of the diagnosis and the cure ranged widely, including jeremiads that France was suffering divine retribution, a strong current of opinion held that the Defeat and the loss of Alsace and part of Lorraine had created a problem of closed space: blocked and dismembered on its eastern frontier, France had been thrown back on itself and was degenerating as a result. Essentially, the source of French ills in this view was a deficiency in national space. *Revanchisme*, the determination to retake Alsace-Lorraine and punish Bismarck's Empire, was one response to such a conclusion. Another proposed remedy, disputed by Continentalists but embraced by many others with enthusiasm, was colonization. Thus Leroy-Beaulieu wrote in the preface to the second edition of *On Colonization*, "Our Continental politics, lest they bring us nothing but setbacks, henceforth must be essentially defensive. It is outside of Europe that we can satisfy our legitimate instinct for expansion. . . . [Colonization] is the only great undertaking that destiny allows us."[25]

Such an intertwined relationship between national destiny and national space is the foundation of Leroy-Beaulieu's most famous pronouncement in

On Colonization, that "the people that colonizes most is the first people. If it is not so today, it will be tomorrow."[26] The orientation toward the future implicit in such a statement presents the conquest of foreign lands not simply as an index of greatness—i.e., size matters—but as an essential quality of the development of nations. Put another way, this view of history held that for a mature nation *not* to colonize—following the typical lexical dichotomy between "mature" colonizers and "childish" colonized—was for it to risk history coming to a halt. Upon predicting alarming growth in the Anglo-Saxon, German, Russian, and Chinese populations of the world, Leroy-Beaulieu thus warns that a small France will have no hope of ranking among such giants. "Our country has one means to escape this irreparable downfall—to colonize."[27] He adds:

> Colonization for France is a question of life or death: either France will become a great African power, or in one century or two it will not be more than a secondary power in Europe. In the world it will count for close to what Greece or Romania count in Europe. We aspire to greater destinies for our *patrie*: may France resolutely become a colonizing nation, for when it does, great expectations and vast thoughts will reopen before it.[28]

Like Fukuzawa and Turner, Leroy-Beaulieu considers France to be at a crossroads in national history in which it faces a choice between a path of progress and a path leading to the diminution and even dissolution of the nation *per se*.

Leroy-Beaulieu's argument for colonization could be dismissed as a fairly banal nationalism were it not for his striking reliance on the tropes of intercourse and theories of national development already observed in the historical narratives of Fukuzawa and Turner. Beginning with the diagnosis of France's national ill itself, the details of Leroy-Beaulieu's argument derive from the market imaginary of history and its conception of national space far more than from simple nationalistic fervor. In the work of late-century colonial propagandists such as Leroy-Beaulieu, liberal arguments on intercourse as the engine of national history became prescriptive: colonization, they argued, would reverse a national decline that they considered to be the result of blocked circulation in Continental France. National progress would recommence with the liberation of national circulation through trade with colonies.

Thus in Leroy-Beaulieu's work liberal faith in the value of the extension of the division of labor is linked to colonial commerce, through which, Leroy-Beaulieu writes, "exchange is energized and extended, and the division of labor increases. Industry, having before itself larger outlets, can and must produce more, and this production on a larger scale leads to new improvements and new progress."[29] In an unusual turn on the treasured notion of transportation in liberal political economy, Leroy-Beaulieu even went so far as to compare such an invigorating effect of colonies on the metropole to that of provincial canals and roads: if the government was willing to spend time and money developing the latter, it was folly to beggar colonial expan-

sion and administration.[30] The colonies as a whole, his argument went, would compensate for the blockage of intercourse that hexagonal France suffered from the loss of Alsace-Lorraine and its diminished position on the Continent.

Leroy-Beaulieu predicted the same beneficial results for the overseas territories that were to be the means of metropolitan renewal. The colonial propagandists of the early Third Republic considered barbarian or semi-civilized areas (again, following the colonialist lexicon of the day) to suffer, like France, from blocked circulation. In contrast to France, however, natural geographical deficiencies in colonized areas were to blame for the sluggish movement of history. By correcting such deficiencies, colonial administration would allow intercourse, and thus history, to recommence in these areas. In keeping with the liberal valorization of transportation, Leroy-Beaulieu called this process the "acheminement à la civilisation" of subject peoples, that is their "transport to civilization" or more literally their being *put on the road* to it.[31] Subject peoples would be made to circulate whether they liked it or not, because it was only through imperially administered circulation that their history could be made to commence.

In this view of colonization colonies become a space in which the problems of circulation in the national-historical space proper, the space of the metropole, can be redressed. With the addition of colonies the division of labor can continue to deepen, networks of exchange can continue to extend their reach, circulation can continue to quicken: history can continue to unfold. Leroy-Beaulieu thus represents the entire enterprise of colonial conquest and administration, the extraction of resources and the metropolitan accumulation of capital, as a necessary stage in the development of nations *per se*. What results, paradoxically, is a Smithian argument in favor of colonization—paradoxical because Smith, as is well known, opposed colonialism on economic grounds. We can see how such a prescription for regeneration would emerge, however, if we recall that in the historical imaginary that we are examining the movement of history depends on free circulation within the national-historical space. Any blockage of such circulation, whether by incomplete realization of national unity (as in Turner) or by its destruction through the imposition of an unnatural internal border, would threaten to bring the historical process to a halt. It is precisely such a blockage that Leroy-Beaulieu foresaw for a France confined to its European frontiers. One singular advantage of colonial circulation, moreover, was that it would be subject to rational planning. Unlike the movement of history on the Continent, history in the colonies would unfold logically under the careful gaze of administrators. This is to say that national history would be taken out of the hands of politicians and put into those of technocrats (or in Paul Rabinow's phrase, techno-cosmopolitans) who could manage its pathways with proper care.[32] Such a perspective gave rise to grandiose public-works projects for the development of transportation, including proposals for a Trans-Saharan railroad and for an inland sea north of the Sahara.

Deeper links between the arguments first observed in *The Wealth of Nations* and this variety of imperialist ideology further attest that such a legitimation of colonial expansion follows logically from liberal conceptions of the nature of society. Recall that in Smith the division of labor exhibits two essential tendencies: toward increasing specialization, but also toward the integration of ever more territory into its dynamic structure. "Society" therefore is inherently expansive in Smith's logic. Such a view of the division of labor underlies both Fukuzawa's and Turner's representations of national history, in which expansive integration serves as a spatial measure of the temporal movement of history. Leroy-Beaulieu exhibits a similar perspective when he defines colonization as "the expansive force of a people, its power of reproduction, its expansion and multiplication across space."[33] Leroy-Beaulieu's overt use of liberal tropes to champion colonialism as the means to satisfy what he calls above "our legitimate instinct for expansion" thus is far from an opportunistic rationalization. Rather it is only an amplification of a position that always had been present in liberalism's fundamental notions of society. On this most basic level, Leroy-Beaulieu's work is not marked by any paradox of "liberal colonialism" but is fully consistent with the representations of national history that we have observed elsewhere in the world at this time.

Despite such a consistency in logic and representation, however, colonial space has an ambivalent status in *On Colonization* that indicates basic instabilities in the way that this system of rhetoric establishes the space of national history. Such instabilities are clear in the two different ways that Leroy-Beaulieu characterizes the relationship between colonial and metropolitan space: on the one hand colonial space is an *addition* to metropolitan space, as an extension of metropolitan networks of intercourse; on the other it is a *substitute*, a self-contained space that is not subject to the setbacks and irrationalities of history on the Continent. In neither case is the nationality of colonial space clear. Lacking the capacity for social development, this space can not be host to its own nation, but it nonetheless is not truly a part of the national space of France. In a sense, colonial space in such a view of history is dependent on the colonizer for its nationality. As we have seen, however, this space is to be the site of metropolitan renewal, and thus its existence seemingly is necessary for the further progress of history in the metropole itself: without colonial expansion, national history will stop.

The ambivalent status of colonial space in Leroy-Beaulieu's representation of history suggests that as a category, colonial space emerges in response to the failure to appear in reality of the perfectly apposite relationship among national-historical spaces that "national history" supposes to exist. The appearance of such perfect apposition, along with its corollary of the natural unity of the people, is blocked by internal divisions, cross-border identities, and the movement of capital over frontiers. All of these violate the assumptions of national history about the character of physical space; it can account for none of them. Epistemologically, colonial space therefore serves in the market imaginary of history to account for the breakdown of historical interiority, of the assertion that the history of the territory claimed by a nation-state unfolds as the sole result of tendencies within its "nation." To borrow a term from Derrida, the space of the colony is a "supplement" to that of the

nation, serving to account for an excess that cannot be contained within historical interiority. To be clear: I am not asserting that the violence of colonialism was the result of fairly obscure problems in historical thought. Rather, I am saying that the particular way that Leroy-Beaulieu inserted colonialism into a liberal narrative of the life of nations transformed it to suit changing metropolitan ideological needs and at the same time postponed the disintegration of the narrative itself by shoring up its epistemological foundations.

Leroy-Beaulieu's argument for colonization as an essential stage in national history thus illustrates general problems in liberal historical imagineries at the same time that it reflects the specific ideological exigency with which he was faced, that of justifying colonial expansion by establishing a necessary relationship between colony and metropole. Once again, comparisons to Fukuzawa and Turner suggest reasons that the liberal narrative of national history took this specific form in early Third-Republic France. As we have seen beginning with Fukuzawa, the liberal historical imaginary served above all to naturalize the establishment and extension of capitalism and its relations of production as the ordained course of national progress. In Japan, among the most pressing tasks in such a project was to locate Japan in the world as a nation among nations, possessing its own history of progress. In the United States, in contrast, the conditions of a settler colony made narratives of unity a comparatively more important goal. Finally in France, with a comparatively stable national identity but radically changing boundaries, the problem rather was to naturalize the relationship of the nation to newly acquired colonies. Colonization became a necessary extension of the movement of national history. To a certain degree the need to reorient narratives of nation-formation to account for expansion was particular to Europe: while Japan and the United States were busily colonizing border areas, they did not seize formal colonies until a few decades later. Nonetheless the specific strategies of Leroy-Beaulieu's legitimation of colonialism followed closely from the rhetoric he shared with Fukuzawa and Turner, and thus from the shared problem of articulating the relationship between the economic and juridical space of the nation-state and the various pasts of the territory it claimed.

The concern to rationally administer circulation that I briefly observed earlier in Leroy-Beaulieu's work points to further commonalities among my French, American, and Japanese examples on the most fundamental historiographical level: that of writing. In light of the link between intercourse and history in *On Colonization*, Leroy-Beaulieu's desire to rationally administer circulation so as to protect it from the vicissitudes of Continental politics finally is a concern to administer national history itself. The undertaking of "civilization and enlightenment" that was the foundation for histories of civilization in Japan and the projects of "Americanization" in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century United States share the same perspective, in which the rhetoric of liberalism and indeed the very category of national history serve to make representable and thus administrable the "nation" as a social totality.

If the commonality among my diverse examples can be traced genealogically to early European liberalism and hence to Enlightenment rationalism, the reasons for the spread of this historical imaginary must be sought in systemic conditions that rendered it particularly valuable in national ideology. At the late nineteenth-century turning point in historiography and geopolitics, the consolidation of the world market and the establishment of an international system of states of global reach were the key conditions supporting the travel of the market imaginary of history. This historiographical problematic best can be understood as a system of rhetoric that makes possible specific strategies of representation; in this sense it was a "theory" of history that took the nation as its privileged scale. Nonetheless those who employed it always had *praxis* as their goal: they sought to establish a determinate representation of history that legitimated the nation-state's claim on territory. Such a method of writing history thus ultimately supported the enclosure and administration of the living inhabitants of specific spaces, and a thorough critique of its operations finally must confront its representation of space.

The group of techniques for representing national history that I have examined serves a dual function in historical practice. It nationalizes the past of the territory that is claimed by the nation-state, and it negotiates the relationship of this space of history to other such spaces, according to the particular position of the nation-state in question. The examples that I have chosen by no means exhaust the range of possibilities. They reveal, however, that one problem that "national history" must grapple with is the continual shifting of the limits of the territory claimed by the nation-state. Thus in the United States, the writing of national history had to account for continuous expansion, while in France it had both to confront the loss of Continental provinces and to explain the relationship of colonies to the metropole. Late nineteenth-century Japanese intellectuals faced perhaps an even more difficult task of creating a representation of an integral national territory from prior conceptions of political space and inserting that territory into the space of the world. It is only a slight leap in logic therefore to say that the central problem in the spatial operations of national history finally was not one of changing frontiers but of novelty and indeed foreignness: as a rule the territory over which the nation-state declares sovereignty always is foreign to it, even if that territory is identical to the territory of a previous regime. The reason is that the spatial parameters of sovereignty of the nation-state depart from those of preceding eras by incorporating new ideas of spatial contiguity and of the identity of juridical and economic boundaries, for example. One great problem that national ideology therefore faces is that of explaining the relationship of the territory of the nation-state to that thing called the "nation" that is supposed to be sovereign within it. The writing of national history resolves this problem by establishing a single past for this territory, a national past. In this kind of historical practice the various pasts of the areas claimed by the nation-state are annexed to the history of the nation.

Returning to the question of the position of national-historical space in the world, the rhetoric that these late nineteenth-century historians appropriated from economic liberalism made possible the representation of the

world as an array of apposite national-historical spaces. According to this perspective there is no space without its national history, with the corollary assertion that if a space is found to be lacking such a history it may and indeed must be annexed to the space of a proper nation. In such a spatial matrix the relative power of nations, political and economic, is explained by the course of their separate national histories. "National history" thus serves as a simultaneous explanation of the political and economic formations of the nation-state and of the geopolitical relations between different nation-states. The writing of "national history" naturalizes the nation-state as a local political form and as the basic unit of a differentially defined system. This is to say that "national history" does not simply naturalize the nation-state by making it the *telos* of history—a point that is well established—but in a more fundamental sense naturalizes the nation-state by defining the space over which it claims sovereignty as the space within which history occurs. The existence of this space is the ground of history. Moreover, to the extent that "national history" naturalizes the nation-state as a local political form it also naturalizes the organization of the world into a system of nation-states.

"National history" as a system of rhetoric therefore aspires to totality on a grand scale: not simply an all-encompassing and coherent representation of the nation, but rather of the world. The logical problems and inconsistencies of category of this system result from disjunctures between the totality that it seeks to construct and the world as it exists. Indeed, the *writing* of the history of nations (that is, historiography as an attempt to create representations rather than as theory or paradigm) exists between this totality and the world. "National history" was, and indeed still is, a method for rendering social phenomena intelligible, for apprehending the world. There should be little doubt that the intellectuals involved in propagating this paradigm advanced the interests of particular groups such as the colonial lobby of France or the modernist (that is, nationalist) political-economic vanguard in Japan. When these intellectuals naturalized the nation-state they legitimated the forced nationalization of populaces, fed alarm about the presence of strangers in the land, justified the seizure of territory overseas. Nonetheless we should acknowledge that intellectuals like Fukuzawa, Turner, and Leroy-Beaulieu also were observing a world in which territoriality quickly was being reduced to two types, that of the nation-state and of the colony. Their work ultimately naturalized these circumstances, but we should acknowledge that it had the immediate purpose of rendering such circumstances intelligible by making them representable. These were no politically neutral representations—there are no such things—but representation nonetheless was and is necessary.

I do not say this to try to redeem Fukuzawa, Turner, and Leroy-Beaulieu on the basis of circumstances, but rather as a caution to myself and other historians at our own geopolitical turning point. I have argued that the rhetoric that late nineteenth century historians drew from economic liberalism helped to articulate the ideology of world capitalism at the time. The same rhetoric, however, plays an obvious role in *neo*liberalism as it strives to legitimate the transnational capitalism of our own time, a new form of domination that one often hears will make the nation-state obsolete. By making clear the connection between the writing of history as the history of nations and the world capitalism of the late nineteenth century, a spatial critique of national history of the sort that I have attempted should temper the occasionally uncritical enthusiasm of recent years to embark on a study of history proclaimed to be transnational or international. The most zealous proponents typically promote this sort of study by arguing that the nation-state is dead and therefore should be cast out of history. In other words, much of the enthusiasm for writing transnational history has not come from a serious, critical reflection on the history of historiography but appears rather to be driven by observation of contemporary economic transitions, indeed by an unskeptical endorsement of them. In the absence of such historiographical reflection, which must include a more thorough examination than I have been able to provide of the relationship between the practice of national history and the economic circumstances of various eras, I fear that transnational historiography, should it ever become an established pursuit, simply will give substance to the ideology of transnational capitalism as the national historiography of the late nineteenth century advanced the economic ideology of its own time.

References

1. The argument of the present paper is condensed from the first three chapters of my Ph.D. dissertation, "National History and the World of Nations: Writing Japan, France, the United States, 1870–1900," Columbia University, 1999.

2. On the pre-liberal background see Eli Heckscher's *Mercantilism*, trans. Mendel Shapiro and E. F. Söderlund, rev. ed. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1955).

3. Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le libéralisme économique. Histoire de l'idée de marché* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), 74.

4. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 17. Smith presents this propensity as the cause of the division of labor a few pages later with the declaration that "it is [the] trucking disposition which originally gives occasion to the division of labor." *Wealth of Nations*, 19.

5. *Wealth of Nations*, 21–23.

6. Rosanvallon discusses the status of division of labor as a philosophical concept in Smith in *Le libéralisme économique*, 76.

7. *Wealth of Nations*, 7–8.

8. In English, see Carmen Blacker, *The Japanese Enlightenment: A Study of the Writings of Fukuzawa Yukichi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 90–100, which also discusses the importance of historiography to "civilization and enlightenment" thought in Japan. For an overview of the genre see Ienaga Saburō, "Keimō shigaku," *Meiji shiron shū I*, ed. Matsushima Eiichi, Meiji bungaku zenshū 77 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1965), 422–27.

9. Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Bunmeiron no gairyaku*, ed. Matsuzawa Hiroaki (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995), 57. The translation is my own. A complete translation is available as *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, trans. David A. Dilworth and Cameron G. Hurst (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1973).

10. *Bunmeiron no gairyaku*, 114–15.

11. *Bunmeiron no gairyaku*, 273.

12. Mill uses the phrase "a portion of humanity" in the passage from *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861) that Fukuzawa is paraphrasing. Later in the same paragraph he identifies common "race" as one basis for nationality, but not the only possible one. Others include language, history, political form, etc.

13. *Bunmeiron no gairyaku*, 40–41.

14. In "National History and the World of Nations" I theorize the relationship between the two tropes of intercourse in the genre of history of civilization through the concept of inversion that Karatani Kōjin develops in *Marukusu sono kanōsei no chūshin* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1974), an analysis of Marx' theory of value. I argue that while irreconcilable, the two tropes jointly invert and obscure causality in the systemic constitution of nation-states. Although the nation-state as a form of territory is the manifestation of systemic conditions in world capitalism in the nineteenth century, the logical inversion in histories of civilization allows the nation-state to appear as if it existed prior to its differential relationships to other nation-states. Systemic conditions thus appear in the genre as the effect of relations among nation-states, rather than nation-states as the effect of such conditions. In texts such as Fukuzawa's the development of "civilization" within the self-contained space of the nation-state therefore emerges as the key to understanding the place of the nation-state in the world: the synchrony of global geopolitics is replaced by the diachronic interiority of national history.

15. See Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism*, trans. Russell Moore (New York: Monthly Review, 1989), 76–77, 109–11, and Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of "the Other" and the Myth of Modernity*, trans. Michael D. Barber (New York: Continuum, 1995), 66–67, 136–37.

16. John Higham offers a concise overview of Progressive history and Turner's place in it in *History: The Development of Historical Studies in the United States* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 171–82. Ernst Breisach examines Turner's contribution in the first chapter of *American Progressive History: An Experiment in Modernization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

17. Drawing on the work of J. G. A. Pocock, Dorothy Ross examines the history of the Jacksonian view of history in "Historical Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century America," *American Historical Review* 89.4 (Oct. 1984), 910–13.

18. On Turner's borrowing from Loria, whom he encountered partly through the work of political economist Richard Ely, see Lee Benson, *Turner and Beard: American Historical Writing Reconsidered* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1960), 1–34.

19. Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" and Other Essays*, ed. John Mack Faragher (New York: Henry Holt, 1994), 40–41.

20. "Significance of the Frontier," 33.

21. Despite his reputation as a progressive, Turner dismissed Populism as a lingering outcropping of lower stages of civilization. "A primitive society can hardly be expected to show the intelligent appreciation of the complexity of business interests in a developed society," he wrote. ("Significance of the Frontier," 55) Turner discussed the persistence of outmoded frontier-era ideals at length in "The Problem of the West" (1896).

22. For a parallel examination of the problem of origins in contemporary Australia see Elizabeth A. Povinelli, "Settler Modernity and the Quest for an Indigenous Tradition," *Public Culture* 11.1 (Winter 1999), 19–48.

23. Chapters three and four of Agnes Murphy's *The Ideology of French Imperialism, 1871–1881* (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1948) give background on Leroy-Beaulieu and his work as an academic and journalist.

24. See Claude Digeon's remarkable *La Crise allemande de la pensée française, 1870–1914* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1959), 1–4, and Raoul Girardet, "Présentation," *Le nationalisme français, 1871–1914*, (Paris: Seuil, 1983), 17, 30–32.

25. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Guillaumin, 1882), viii. The translation is my own.

26. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes* (Paris: Guillaumin, 1874), 606.

27. *De la colonisation*, 2nd ed., viii.

28. *De la colonisation*, 2nd ed., viii–ix.

29. *De la colonisation,* 502.
30. *De la colonisation,* 530–31.
31. *De la colonisation,* vii.
32. Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 12.
33. *De la colonisation,* 605.

10. China's Search for National History

Q. Edward Wang[1]

This essay aims to trace the origin of national historical writing in twentieth-century China, yet it is clear to the author that this can be a perplexing task, for the term "national history," or *kuo-shih,* in modern Chinese is not a neologism; it is rather an old usage that has existed in Chinese historiography for a number of centuries. Referring to a contemporary account of the history of the reigning dynasty, "National history," or *Kuo-shih*, first appeared in historical texts as early as the third century. It performed a similar function as the *Shih-lu* (veritable records) and *Ch'i-chü-chu* (court diary) and offered a useful basis for a much more comprehensive account to be compiled later by historians of the succeeding dynasty.[2] In China's long historiographical tradition, therefore, the writing of national history had been an integral component of dynastic historiography, its most celebrated historical practice. However, towards the beginning of the twentieth century when China was forced to enter the West-centered "modern" world, the practice of dynastic historiography came under siege—Chinese intellectuals began to use the term "national history" again, only to assign it with a different meaning that heralded a new experience the country was to go through in the years to come.

This new *Kuo-shih*, or national history writing, as I would like to argue, marked a turning point in modern Chinese historiography in the early twentieth century. In order to show its importance, let us take a look at its earliest advocates, or Chinese national historians of their very first generation. As is well known, China's entrance to the modern world was not a pleasant experience; it was fraught with defeats and humiliations. These shattering defeats and shameful losses urged some Chinese to search for means to regain wealth and power (*fu-ch'iang*) in the world outside of their own. The protagonists of my study were such a pioneer group of intellectuals who, while receiving a classical education when young, relentlessly pursued a new knowledge offered by the new world. Most of them sojourned in post-Meiji Japan at the turn of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, where they were exposed to Western learning through Japanese translation. As national