

## Margins of modernity: identities and incitements

This chapter focuses on questions and contentions of identity and modernity, entailing stipulations of time and space. Instead of approaching identity as an already given entity that is principally antithetical to modernity, in speaking of identities my reference is to wide-ranging processes of formations of subjects, expressing not only particular personhoods but also collective groupings. Upon such an understanding, then, identities comprise a crucial means through which social processes are perceived, experienced, and articulated. Indeed, defined within historical relationships of production and reproduction, appropriation and approbation, and power and difference, cultural identities (and their mutations) are essential elements in the quotidian constitution (and pervasive transformations) of social worlds. These are issues to which I shall return. The point now is that the account ahead explores the elaborations of identities within historical anthropology, including postcolonial perspectives and subaltern approaches. In these domains, identities have been articulated as part of critical considerations, at once theoretical and empirical, not only of colony and community and empire and nation, but also of modernity and history and their entanglements and contradictions, the subjects of this book.

### Untangling identity

An apparent irony involving the past in our present turns on and draws together the terrains of history, modernity, and identity. Here is what

the irony entails: exactly at the moment when formative procedures of disciplinary history writing have come under searing scrutiny in the academy, claims upon heritage and history have become combustible questions and burning issues in the wider worlds of citizens and subjects of modern rule – contemporary regimes of state and nation, race and reason, majority and minority, community and gender, and ethnicity and identity.

Now, insistent demands on historical identity as well as searching criticisms of disciplinary history writing have existed in the past. This has to do with the contradictions and contentions of modernity discussed in the last four chapters. On the one hand, critical strains of modern knowledge, including hermeneutic ones, have for a long time queried the claims of an aggrandizing reason and the conceits of historical progress – of modernity, nation, and the disciplines. On the other, processes of modernity have frequently imbued with a specific salience the categories-entities of tradition and culture, community and identity, turning them into the very stuff of heritage and history. Unsurprisingly, enunciations and denunciations of history and interrogations and entitlements of identity have loomed large, even monstrously, in modern projects of division and unity, from nationalisms and genocides through to fourth-world politics and minority endeavors. It is a formidable “contemporary arrogance” that overplays the uniqueness of our times.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, however, critiques of (disciplinary) history and clamors over (cultural) identities have acquired urgency in our recent pasts. Actually, the contentions and claims form part of the same logic, turning on the subversions and seductions of the representations and ruptures of modernity. To begin with, as the first chapter noted, the questioning of dominant history writing in recent decades derives from at least three distinct yet overlapping critical dispositions. First, key challenges to pervasive protocols of universal history. Such moves have at once explored distinct pasts under wider intermeshed relations of power and queried the abiding imperatives of historical progress and the very nature of the academic archive, each envisioned as an intimate image of a reified West. Second, acute interrogations of

dominant designs of a singular modernity, which have simultaneously revealed the contradictory and contingent nature of the phenomena as well as explored contending intimations of heterogeneous moderns. Finally, the placing of a question mark over the enduring oppositions of modern worlds. This has involved measures that have at once queried a subject-centered reason and a meaning-legislating rationality and challenged the analytical binaries of academic disciplines and wide-ranging representations of cultural otherness. Clearly, at stake here are the contentions not merely of modern knowledge, but of modernity at large.

All of this registered, it is to the other side of the apparent irony of the past in our present that I now turn. For, alongside such querying of authoritative history writing, consider the manner in which, over the same time period, terms such as culture, tradition, and identity have increasingly, assertively become much more than mere intellectual devices. Rather, these terms are ever more seized upon by their objects of analysis, the very people the concepts once purported merely to categorize, analyze, and describe. From impoverished indigenous communities to rich immigrant populations to various religious militants to formidable power brokers in the world at large, here are subjects who have zealously claimed identity and history, tradition and culture, articulating them in intriguing ways, including by living and dying in the name of these categories and entities. The point is that demands on pasts and identities have been central to such procedures, albeit in innately different ways. Unsurprisingly, representations of history and identity regularly find shifting yet salient configurations – as contested territory, ambivalent resource, ready motif, and settled verity – within public discourses. From the fourth world through to the first, there is no turning away from the specter of history, no simple shrugging off of the burden of identity.

This is to say further that the insistent and contending claims on history and identity in the here and now signal something specific about contemporary worlds. The point is that emphatic demands on the past – including especially escalating expressions of tradition, culture, and identity – are far from being primordial patterns or recalcitrant

residues that modern and global processes of capital and consumption, reason and nation, and state and citizenship have been unable to stamp out. Rather, the pervasive presence of these concepts and resources indicates their renewed salience within schemes of modernity. Such salience and schemes are ever more expressed today by subjects of modernity – as well as by modern subjects – of distinct persuasions, as they articulate on the ground, in everyday spaces and public places, the West and the nation, history and globalization, the religious and the secular, and cultural politics and political cultures. To reiterate, none of this might be entirely new, but it has assumed exponential exigency today. At work, then, is nothing less than distinct manifestations and critical articulations of the configurations and consequences of modernity, identity, and history, as ideal and ideology and as process and practice.<sup>2</sup>

All of this indicates equally the importance of rethinking our usual understandings of identities and their implications. Now, when I write of identity in these pages, the reference is to processes of formations of subjects – processes, formations, and subjects that militate against persistent projections of sovereign “individuals” and primordial “communities.” Instead, as indicated earlier, identities entail at once collective groupings and particular personhoods, where the one betokens the other. This is to say that as critical attributes of the constitution of subjects, identities form essential elements in the everyday production and reproduction of social life. They turn on simultaneously symbolic and substantive – and structured yet fluid – attitudes and imaginings, norms and practices, and rituals and dispositions. Here are to be found the resources through which social relationships within and between groups/classes/communities/genders are perceived, experienced, and articulated, including the construal of time and space as part of these processes.

Moreover, in the perspective that I am sketching, identities are defined within historical relationships of production and reproduction, appropriation and consumption, empire and modernity, and nation and globalization. They emerge critically mediated by shifting configurations of gender and class/caste, race and age, office and sexuality.

Such relationships and configurations, predicated upon power, involve diverse renderings of domination and subordination – as well as negotiations and contestations of authority – in distinct arenas. Constitutive of dominant and subaltern identities, here are to be found contradictory processes that are simultaneously characterized by the work of hegemony and the reworking of power, which form part of the same logic.<sup>3</sup> Unsurprisingly, on offer also are authoritative temporal and spatial representations and practices as well as their articulations in the production of space and time in everyday arenas.

Lastly, in such an orientation, identity neither spells a priori sameness nor indicates unchanging inventories of exclusive beliefs, bounded traditions, and distinct customs of particular peoples, groups, or communities. Rather, identities entail at once assertions of sameness and practices of difference. They turn upon the ways in which symbolic imaginaries and meaningful practices are implicated in and lived within human worlds, insinuated at the core of the entangled relationships and contentious processes of these terrains. Since these relationships, processes, and worlds change, makeovers and modifications are at the heart of identities, including the pervasive construal of heterogeneous yet overlaying spaces and times, entailing in turn authority as well as alterity.

It bears emphasis that I underscore the intersections between overlapping yet distinct processes of power, technologies of representation, relationships of production, and modes of reproduction as critical to the articulation of identities. This has important consequences, especially as each of these coordinates is rendered an integral part of historical practices. On the one hand, my efforts challenge pervasive, commonplace, reductive projections of identity, themselves founded on the putative ruptures of modernity. On the other, having learned from the critical ferment in contemporary thinking, but without necessarily submitting to its conceits that dissolve social subjects altogether, the moves clear the ground for explorations of the substantive mutual contributions of historical anthropology, subaltern studies, and post-colonial perspectives in understandings of identities.<sup>4</sup>

How does this chapter approach questions of time and space, their mutual enmeshment and active construal within these disciplinary

perspectives? My efforts do not trace the particular ways in which each of the writings under discussion individually challenges (or reiterates) dominant temporal-spatial representations. Nor do I track notions and notations of space and time produced within the epistemic practice of this scholarship.<sup>5</sup> Rather, my bid is twofold. It reads historical anthropology, subaltern studies, and postcolonial perspectives into each other as together articulating colony and nation, community and history in a manner that, far from temporally-spatially segregating modernity and identity, understands their common construal in/of time and space. This further allows for the possibility of readings that can track the production of nonhierarchical hetero-temporalities and socio-spatial expression in these terrains.<sup>6</sup>

## Colony and empire

Influential tendencies within postcolonial perspectives and subaltern studies have tended to treat colony and empire as totalized formations, spatially and temporally.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, important writings with newer sensibilities have also thought through postulates of overarching colonial structures and overriding imperial systems. Such rethinking has been led by seminal scholarship in historical anthropology.<sup>8</sup> Studies in this genre have explored the contradictory location and contending agendas of distinct colonizing peoples and diverse colonized groups in the creation of colonial cultures of rule. This has involved discussions of the representations and practices and the boundaries and contradictions of imperial agents, settler communities, and evangelizing missionaries in colonial locations. In brief, there have been critical examinations of not only colonized populations, but also colonizing peoples, even if the programmatic desire toward treating the colonizer and the colonized as parts of a single analytical field has sometimes receded into the background here. At any rate, such studies have revealed the persistent fault lines and the critical divisions between different agents of colonialism, diverse agendas of empire.<sup>9</sup> On the one hand, the racial

mythologies and the homespun lifestyles of colonizers sought to blur such fault lines, often invoking an exclusive time-space of European (and Euro-American) folk. On the other, divisions between different colonialist groups also stood highlighted within everyday representations and quotidian practices in distinct contexts, betraying contending spatial and contentious temporal matrices among them.

It follows that the view of colonialism as a monolithic temporal venture, a homogeneous spatial project, stands severely tested today. At issue here are not only the variations in the colonial endeavors and imperial exertions of different nations and separate epochs, featuring diverse forms of production and exchange, all important distinctions recognized in earlier scholarship. Rather, recent ethnographies and histories have revealed that the conflicting interests and the contending visions of empire of differentially located interests and actors several times drove a single colonial project. At the same time, distinct colonial projects could draw upon each other's models and metaphors, while imbuing them with varied and contrary salience. Here were to be found jumbled, conflicting temporal and spatial processes.<sup>10</sup>

Three examples should suffice. In the case of colonial South Africa, Jean and John Comaroff have shown that the exact divisions and conflicts, bearing critical spatial-temporal dimensions, between British administrators, evangelical missionaries, and Dutch settlers led to the elaboration of race and empire.<sup>11</sup> My own work on the evangelical enterprise in central India underscores that American missionaries in the region borrowed from the governmental modalities and cartographic practices of Her Majesty's imperial administration in order to elaborate a rather distinct vision and practice, space and time, of "the Empire of Christ."<sup>12</sup> Finally, K. Sivaramakrishnan's study of the construal of the colonial state, the shaping of forests, and the making of "tribal" places in nineteenth-century woodland Bengal, eastern India, brings together several of the concerns outlined above.<sup>13</sup> Imaginatively intervening in debates in recent environmental studies and colonial discourse theory, he brings to bear on postcolonial and subaltern studies the perspectives of a critical historical geography, itself shoring up an

innovative environmental history. On the one hand, Sivaramakrishnan attends to the construction of space as part of historical practice, transcending, too, facile distinctions between “metaphorical” and “material” spaces. On the other hand, his emphases further suggest the importance of tracking how the conflicting interests and the contending visions of empire of socio-spatially differentially located actors could coalesce in a single colonial project, shaped by different overlaying temporalities.

All this has underwritten close analyses of the relationship between the metropolis and the colony, which have queried pervasive projections of their inexorable spatial segregation based on a singular hierarchizing time. It has become increasingly clear that there were conjunctions and connections – and contentions and contradictions – between efforts to discipline and normalize subject groups at home and attempts to civilize and control subject populations in the colonies.<sup>14</sup> Such explorations have carried forward earlier examinations and contemporary discussions of imperial histories and colonial cultures as deriving from interactions between the colonizer and the colonized. They have crucially considered the mutual shaping of European processes and colonial practices in order to imaginatively analyze how developments in distant margins could influence metropolitan transformations of identity, how the impulses of empire and their reworking in the colonies brought about changes at the heart of Western history.<sup>15</sup>

Here, the explorations have included the incisive examination by Uday Mehta of the focal presence of the Indian colony in the shaping of the very premises of dominant political thought in nineteenth-century Britain, revealing the significance of empire in structuring the “anthropological” propensities of liberal theory. At stake are liberal thought’s fundamental “strategies of exclusion,” resting on projections of the (civilizational) “infantilism” and (inherent) “inscrutability” of Indians that placed them in the spatial-temporal “waiting room” of colonial history until they could be extricated from there by their (imperial) rulers and benefactors.<sup>16</sup> The analyses have extended to the imaginative excursus by Peter van der Veer into the interplay between religion and politics in the common constitution of empire and nation in Britain and India.<sup>17</sup> This highlights the differences of the modern

state in these terrains, while also questioning the temporal-spatial binary of a secular West and a religious East.

Such recognition has further led to varied analyses of the many modes and diverse forms entailed by colonial processes. There have been remarkable studies of the colonization of space, time, language, and the body;<sup>18</sup> critical discussions of imperial travel, exhibitory orders, and museum collections;<sup>19</sup> deft analyses of colonial representations;<sup>20</sup> astute probing of the politics under empire of art, literature, culture, and consumption;<sup>21</sup> and striking work on sexuality, race, and desire as shaping the metropolis and the margins.<sup>22</sup> The historical identities spawned by colonial cultures have made a striking appearance on the stage of the humanities and the social sciences, inviting reconsiderations of space and time – and of territories and imaginaries – of empires and their subjects.

In several ways, this emphasis has provided a valuable corrective to reifications of an impersonal, exclusive world capitalist system and privileges accorded to abstract, singular colonial structures, each with their own subterranean temporal dynamic and irrevocable spatial logic, which characterized several influential writings in the past.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, the concerns of culture here do not necessarily discount considerations of political economy and aspects of state power. Rather, several significant studies in this new genre suggest the importance of tracking the interplay between forms of representation, processes of political economy, and imperatives of state formation in expressions of identity.<sup>24</sup> Here there is no a priori privilege accorded to any one of these heuristic domains on the grounds of meta-theory. Instead, the mutual determinations of these analytical arenas appear better articulated through histories and ethnographies that eschew rigorously formal frameworks and avoid resolutely abstract blueprints, also intimidating thereby newer renderings of colonies and empires, their times and spaces.

Such nuanced understandings of culture and power have emerged bound to powerful reminders that gender and sexuality crucially inflected the temporal-spatial formations of identity under empire. Salient scholarship has underscored that the profound importance of

gender identities for imperial formations extended very widely from the lifestyles of Euro-American peoples in the colony to the politics of colonial representations; from the tensions of empire to the implications of colonial civility; and from the divisions among the colonialists to varieties of material exchanges, museum collections, and exhibitory orders. Similarly, the key influence of sexual subjectivities in the conquest of space and time cut across truly broad, crisscrossing terrain from the mutual entailments of the metropolis and the margins to the colonization of language and bodies; from the contradictory location of colonial agents to the complex fabrication of imperial cartographies; and from definitions of space(s) of wilderness to delineations of time(s) of modernity. On the one hand, in each case the critical forces of gender and sexuality shaped and structured the different dynamics and diverse dimensions of colonialism's cultures and the identities these spawned. On the other, the intersections between race, class, and gender – as imaginaries and institutions – in the construal of identities acquired new meanings through their elaboration within/of colonial temporal imperatives and imperial spatial stipulations.<sup>25</sup>

The critical spirit of such work has been extended by two other developments. First, key discussions have rethought the past and the present of the disciplines, especially keeping in view their linkages with determinations of colony, nation, race, and gender. Of special significance here have been forceful considerations of the acute inequalities of knowledge and power between the West and the Rest, dominant visions and minority voices, and metropolitan histories and provincial pasts, inequities that carry critical spatial and temporal implications.<sup>26</sup> Second, the corpus of writings stressing the critical place of the colonial experience in the making of the modern world have not only reached beyond analyses focusing on the shaping of Europe by empire, but they have also put a different spin on configurations of time and space in the past and the present. In addition to perspectives on the coloniality/decoloniality of power/knowledge that were discussed earlier, important here have been distinct studies focusing on the linkages of the Enlightenment and empire, race and reason, the past and the present.<sup>27</sup>

## Pasts and communities

All of this is equally indicative of the manner in which the critical rethinking of history, identity, and historical identities has been at the core of historical anthropology, subaltern studies, and postcolonial perspectives. On the one hand, members of the South Asian subaltern studies collective have pointed to the place of power in the production of the past.<sup>28</sup> Needless to say, they have done this alongside other intellectuals, focusing on diverse geopolitical areas.<sup>29</sup> Such measures have underscored the inherently political character of history writing while putting a question mark over the very nature of the academic historical archive. On the other hand, scholars of anthropology, history, and related disciplines have emphasized the socio-spatial plurality of cultural pasts, the manner in which history and temporality are differently approached and understood, seized upon and set to work by distinct social groups in conversation with their identities.<sup>30</sup>

Three overlaying emphases have played a crucial role in such considerations.<sup>31</sup> To begin with, it has been diversely admitted that forms of historical consciousness vary in their degree of symbolic elaboration, their ability to pervade multiple contexts, and their capacity to capture people's imaginations between and across socio-spatial groupings and their identities. Second, it has been increasingly noted that history does not just refer to events and processes out there, but that it exists as a negotiated resource at the core of shifting, temporal-spatial configurations of historical worlds and social identities. Third and finally, as was indicated earlier, there has been an opening up of critical questions considering the coupling of history writing with the modern nation and of the haunting presence of a reified "West" in widespread beliefs in historical progress, each shored up by the hierarchizing of social space through the ruse of singular time.

Together, in approaching the past and the present, such efforts toward critical history writing have often bound the impulse to cautiously probe and affirm social worlds with the desire to carefully narrate and describe them. The endeavors have truly taken seriously the

requirements of evidence and fidelity to facts. Yet they have also sieved historical evidence through critical filters and construed unexpected facts, times, and spaces, which speak in the uneasy echoes of limiting doubt rather than deal in dead certainties.<sup>32</sup> It only follows that the emphases outlined above have not resorted to spatial-temporal, geometric oppositions involving cyclical notions of the past as characteristic of the East and linear conceptions of history as constitutive of the West. Nor have they approached the assertive appropriations and enunciations of the past in historical and contemporary worlds by submitting to views that each of these visions is equally true. Rather, they have precisely probed such overwrought blueprints and solipsistic schemes by tracking expressions of history as made up of interleaving, conflict-ridden processes of meaning and authority, time and space, ever entailing identity and authority, dominance and difference.<sup>33</sup>

In this terrain, the explorations have traced the variability and mutability that can inhere in the temporal perceptions and spatial practices concerning the pasts of cultural communities. They have tracked the uses of history and their contending validities in the making of social identities, turning on space and time, especially the play of power in the production of history. In elaborations of these conjoint emphases, particularly pertinent are Shahid Amin's innovative account of the interplay between governmental demands and subaltern desires in the spatial remembering and temporal monumentalizing of a critical event of Indian nationalism in a North Indian village across the twentieth century;<sup>34</sup> Ajay Skaria's thickly textured study of wildness, environment, gender, and politics among the Dangis of western India, especially as based on these people's narratives of "colonial" and "extra-colonial" times and spaces;<sup>35</sup> and Ishita Banerjee-Dube's imaginative inquiry into the unfolding of oral and written histories and sectarian and ascetic formations – each inflected by the presence of the law and the state, the temporal and the spatial – within a popular religious formation in eastern India from the mid-nineteenth century through to the present.<sup>36</sup>

All of these writings have variously combined historical fieldwork and ethnographic archival research. Unsurprisingly, they have been

accompanied by analyses that have unraveled and interrogated dominant mappings of time and space: from the persistent oppositions between myth and history through to pervasive projections of the West and nation as history, modernity, and destiny for all people and every identity. Important examples of such work reside in the challenges posed by Dipesh Chakrabarty's forceful philosophical critique of the developmental premises of "historicism" thinking, discussed earlier, as well as by Gyanendra Pandey's recent critical considerations of the formidable violence that is at once embodied and ignored, made routine and glossed over, by the modern coupling of nation and history.<sup>37</sup>

No less than in relation to history, the acute rethinking of identity in connection with community has been at the core of historical anthropologies, postcolonial perspectives, and subaltern endeavors. Here, too, there has been a braiding of two apparently incommensurable yet actually complementary emphases. On the one hand, several scholars associated with subaltern studies have underscored the key role of the community as an ethical formation in questioning and challenging projects of power – of colony and empire, nation and history – and thereby construing discrete notations of space and time.<sup>38</sup> On the other, distinct strands of critical scholarship have queried persistent, spatially-temporally static portrayals of the community as an ineluctably anachronistic, tightly bounded entity, one tending toward consensus in its expression, entailing allegiance to primordial tradition, and as broadly opposed to modernity. Together, communities have come to be understood as active participants in wider processes of colonialism and empire, nation and nationalism, state and citizen, and modernity and globalization, participants that imbue such processes – themselves made up of diverse relationships of meaning and power – with their own terms and textures, perceptions and practices, including of time and space.<sup>39</sup>

Writings in historical anthropology, subaltern studies, and post-colonial approaches have explored the many meanings of community construed by its members, especially their symbolization and elaboration of boundaries, necessarily socio-spatial-temporal, as providing substance to their differences and identities. To start with, this

has involved examinations of the constitutive location of community within wide-ranging processes of power as well as of its internal divisions as expressed in terms of property, gender, law, and office.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, such efforts have been fortified by incisive accounts of communities as questioning and contesting dominant projects of meaning and power, including those turning on empire and nation as well as religion and race, unraveling their challenge to authority in a historically and ethnographically layered manner.<sup>41</sup> Finally, there have been diverse endeavors to write greater heterogeneity – across social space and cultural time – into the concept of community. Indeed, recent reconfigurations of the category have derived further support from the thinking through of the endless antinomy between community and state, moves that have queried the analytical binaries of modern disciplines, which are closely bound to totalizing temporal templates of universal history and exclusive spatial blueprints of Western modernity.

Some studies have combined these overlapping emphases. We have noted the work of Skaria on the Dangs in western India and of Banerjee-Dube on Orissa in eastern India.<sup>42</sup> In addition, consider my historical and anthropological exploration of an untouchable and heretical caste-sect formation of Chhattisgarh in central India over the past two centuries.<sup>43</sup> The account focuses on a large internally differentiated community in order to trace the endeavors of its members within changing relations of power and property under precolonial regimes and colonial rule in the region; track the group's negotiation and reproduction of ritual authority and gender hierarchies; and explore its articulations of caste and Hinduism, evangelism and empire, and state and nation, especially as these were played out in everyday arenas. Especially important in each of these steps were the explicit articulations of the community's perceptions and practices and the implicit intimations of its construal of cultural time and social space. Together, such writings suggest that prudent procedures in historical anthropology, postcolonial perspectives, and subaltern studies are at work in the rethinking not only of community and history, but also of nation-state, nationalism, and modernity.

## Nation and modernity

Key departures in historical anthropology, subaltern studies, and post-colonial understandings have played an important part in reformulations of approaches to nation, nationalism, and the identities they spawn. Beginning with the critical rethinking of these concepts-entities within subaltern studies, the endeavors have extended in postcolonial scholarship to the highlighting of the pedagogical performances of the nation and unraveling(s) of the scandal of the state.<sup>44</sup> In explicit and implicit ways, issues of time and space lie at the core of these understandings of identities, broadly conceived.

Together, the writings in these arenas have thought through pervasive projections of nations, nationalisms, and national identities as expressing primordial temporal patterns and innate spatial designs, which turn upon each other, seamlessly and timelessly. They have also interrogated the ways in which various renderings of such identities can be differently yet intimately bound to authoritative – indeed, biographical – portraits of nation-states and nationalist endeavors, each understood as image and practice, especially entailing territorial-historical space-time. In such questioning, a key role has been played by the acute recognition that nations, nationalisms, and national identities are historical and social artifacts and processes, constructed temporally and spatially. This is to say that, although nations, nationalisms, and the identities they spawn are among the most consequential features of modern times, they nonetheless display attributes of what Benedict Anderson has called “imagined communities.”<sup>45</sup> Following such recognition, there have been astute studies of socio-spatial and cultural-temporal productions of nations, nationalisms, and national cultures/identities as projects and processes of power and meaning. Here ethnographies and histories have come together with sociological discussions and literary explorations not only to query familiar understandings of these categories and entities, but actually to do this by tracking their varied creations and formidable fabrications.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, other related efforts have focused on how the ideological frames, pedagogical performances, and narrative techniques

assiduously construing nation, nationalism, and nationalist identities insinuate rather more than mere ideational errors. Rather, such patterns and procedures – turning on articulations and reifications of time and space – each acquire a formidable presence in the world, assuming acute ontological attributes.<sup>47</sup>

These emphases have been accompanied by analyses stressing the socio-spatial differences and cultural-temporal distinctions at the core of nations, nationalisms, and the identities they beget, particularly considering the subaltern expressions, anticolonial manifestations, and gendered dimensions of these ensembles. We saw that the subaltern studies project and associated scholarly developments led to rich explorations of the idioms and trajectories of wide varieties of subaltern endeavors. Against the grain of nationalist propositions and instrumentalist projections concerning the politics and identities of the lower orders, these analyses have shown that, in the broader terrain of anticolonial politics, subaltern ventures followed a creative process of straddling and subverting the ideas, symbols, and practices defining dominant nationalism. Such initiatives thereby articulated a supplementary politics, intimating accompanying identities, with distinct visions of the nation and particular expressions of nationalism, entailing and engendering times and spaces, which accessed and exceeded the aims and strategies of a generally middle-class nationalist leadership.<sup>48</sup>

Unsurprisingly, extending the terms of these deliberations, it has been emphasized that middle-class anticolonial nationalisms and nationalist identities embodied their own difference and distinction, spatial and temporal, ahead of likenesses of the nation in the looking glass of Europe. In particular, by drawing on yet reworking European democratic and republican traditions and Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment principles, middle-class nationalist endeavors and identities translated and transformed the ideals of the sovereign nation and the images of the free citizen through forceful filters of the subjugated homeland and the colonized subject.<sup>49</sup> With distinct accents, other critical writings have unraveled the presence of gender and the place of women in formations of modern nations and articulations of nationalist identities. In place here have been astute explorations of the

social mappings of space-time of the nation through identifications of domesticity; the gendered construal of the homeland as a feminine figure; women's participation and presence, involving tropes/times of family and kinship, in nationalist endeavors and identities; and the socio-spatially ambiguous identifications of gender that attend their definition as citizen-subjects. In this way, the analytic of gender has incisively interrogated the attributes of authority and alterity, of time and space, at the heart of nations and nationalisms in their dominant and subaltern incarnations.<sup>50</sup>

All of this has meant that salient recent work has probed the identities and differences embodied by nation and state, examining especially their intimate associations as well as contending connections with modern power and global transactions. Rather than accepting the spatial-temporal identifications of the nation-state as settled analytical coordinates, recent writings have explored the interplay of national and nationalist imperatives with transnational and global processes, critically examining how the one can be inextricably embedded in the other. Here are to be found explorations of the representation of historical images in the making of a diasporic "community" as well as analyses of the everyday production of the space-time of the nation that question the limitations of "methodological nationalism."<sup>51</sup>

Still other studies have focused on the nation-state as entailing sets of frequently conflicting disciplines to normalize and order society and identity, bringing to the fore what Hansen and Stepputat have summarized as three "practical" languages of governance and three "symbolic" languages of authority, which are together crucial for understanding state, nation, and identity.<sup>52</sup> The pedagogies, performances, and practices of state and nation – and the identities they engender – have been critically unraveled through scholarship that has focused on the quotidian configurations and everyday identifications of these concepts and entities. Such different yet interconnected emphases have clarified that across shifting contexts and terrains, propelled by distinct agendas and aspirations, nationalisms and nation-states have articulated wide varieties of spatial-temporal practice, disciplinary power, and cultural identity.<sup>53</sup>

At the same time, related work has pointed to distinct tensions at the core of the modern state. A single salient instance should suffice here. The political philosopher William Connolly has reminded us of the intensification in the present of a subterranean tension that has long resided at the core of modern pluralist democracies.<sup>54</sup> This tension inheres in how such polities, as Stephen White in his discussion of Connolly's ideas puts it, "by their very nature experience friction between the imperative of protecting the economic and cultural conditions of the distribution of identities existing at any given time, on the one hand, and the imperative of openness to the emergence of new identities, on the other."<sup>55</sup> Now, what happens under contemporary conditions of "late modernity" is that this tension is intensified, leading to two unrelenting, opposed, simultaneous socio-spatial responses: an acceleration toward more and more "*cultural pluralisation*" and, conversely, an increasingly "*aggressive fundamentalisation* of existing identities."<sup>56</sup>

Here, it seems to me, that to critically and carefully consider the entwining of these impulses – of the pluralization and fundamentalisation of identities – is to ask and explore how such entanglements straddle the state and its subjects, the nation and its representations, multiculturalism and its advocates, and global politics and their constituencies, including the spatial and temporal imperatives of the "minority" and the "majority." All of this further entails attention to enactments on the ground not only of stipulations of "modern pluralist democracies" – which are no longer only envisioned in the limited likeness, the exclusive experience of an abstract West – but equally of the rejection of democratic imperatives. Such enactments are mapped in terms of their distinct hetero-temporal articulations and socio-spatial expressions, characteristic of modernity as a global phenomenon.<sup>57</sup>

Unsurprisingly, incisive discussions in historical anthropology and critical ethnography have pointed toward the need for careful considerations of modernity and modern identities, their processes and persuasions. As has been noted already, there has been prescient probing in this terrain of the analytical abstractions and the formalist frames that endlessly attend apprehensions of these categories. It has become

clear that ahead of their exclusive images, the divergent articulations of modernity and contending identifications of the modern have been linked to particular processes of history and culture, identity and difference, time and space.<sup>58</sup> Equally, such work has highlighted that the diverse spatial-temporal manifestations of modernity and modern identity have been frequently influenced by singular likenesses of Western modernity, where the singularity and universal cast of the latter are differently engaged by the plural and vernacular attributes of the former.<sup>59</sup> Precisely these distinct procedures shape, structure, and suture the terms, textures, and transformations of empire, nation, and globalization.<sup>60</sup>

## Coda

At the end, let me point to how this discussion of identity and modernity suggests wider critical considerations. The point is simple. When inquiring into identities, it is crucial to query the pervasive antinomies between the “universal” and the “particular” and “power” and “difference.” After all, it is much too easy to rail against the universality and power of modernity in order to simply celebrate the particularity and difference of identity. Instead, the more challenging task involves exploring the articulation of identities as expressing the shared entailments and mutual productions of power and difference, as interleaving the founding exclusions and constitutive contradictions of authority and alterity, entailing as well as engendering formations of space, notations of time. This further means that the productive possibilities of postcolonial emphases, subaltern studies, and historical anthropology – in this case concerning identities – inhere in constant vigilance against their self-projections as always subversive, already known modes of scholarly knowledge and political criticism. Rather, it is through the self-questioning of their formative presumptions and formidable limitations that these approaches can more adequately explore modernity, history, identity, and their interplay – as shaped by the concatenations of distinct yet coeval temporalities and of overlapping

yet heterogeneous spaces. After all, such distinction and heterogeneity have been the soul, stuff, and substance of modernity and its subjects, of subjects of modernity and modern subjects. These are issues that run through the epilogue that follows.

## Notes

- 1 Trouillot, “North Atlantic universals,” p. 46.
- 2 See, for example, Dube, *Stitches on Time* and *After Conversion*.
- 3 This is to say that just as analytically fatal mistakes surround understandings of hegemony as a closed system of cultural and ideological control by dominant groups so also theoretically grave errors attend the reification of subaltern autonomy and agency, an issue discussed in Dube, *Stitches on Time*.
- 4 Following from this, it is important to register the heterogeneity at the core of subaltern studies, postcolonial perspectives, and historical anthropology. In basic terms, we might distinguish between two tendencies. On the one hand, strongly influenced by critical theory – especially the work of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, but also the writings of philosophers and critics from Martin Heidegger to Edward Said – a key corpus has focused on formations and regimens of modern power. Such scholarship has especially tracked the discursive entailment and constitutive embedding of power in projects and provisos of, for example, empire, modernity, state, and nation. Here extraordinary efficacy has been accorded often to dominance and its dissonance, so that practices and processes construed by historical subjects have primarily appeared as encompassed by power and its productivity. On the other hand, distinct dispositions have focused on the contingent and contradictory elaborations of societal processes and cultural practices as enacted by historical subjects. Such practices, processes, and subjects have been explored as at once part of and themselves articulating relationships of power, but without turning power into a fetishized force and omnipresent totality. Here are to be found examinations of the vexed relationships between culture, structure, action, and event, including the ways each of these terms mediate history. Here are to be

discovered, too, discussions that cast the metropolis and the margins and the dominant and the subaltern as part of mutual analytical fields, including by tracking the transformations of time-space within anthropology and history.

- 5 As the previous chapters have indicated, these are potentially valuable endeavors, worth undertaking in their own right.
- 6 In taking these steps, I follow particular protocols of citation, an issue that was discussed in the Preface. Thus, in the references provided below, I juxtapose writings from distinct “areas” and different “disciplines” as part of a critical narrative. Here, specific studies are drawn on in a manner that articulates their wide analytical implications.
- 7 Dube, “Terms that bind”; Dube, “Anthropology, history, historical anthropology.”
- 8 Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*, vol. 1 (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1991); Comaroff and Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*; Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*; Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).
- 9 Ann Laura Stoler, “Rethinking colonial categories: European communities and the boundaries of rule,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13 (1989): 134–61; Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*. See also Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (London: Cassell, 1999); Ranajit Guha, “Not at home in empire,” in Dube (ed.), *Postcolonial Passages*, pp. 38–46. For wider discussions, see Dube, *Stitches on Time*.
- 10 Stoler, “Rethinking colonial categories”; Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*; Thomas, *Colonialism’s Culture*; Cooper and Stoler, *Tensions of Empire*.

- 11 John Comaroff, "Images of empire, contests of conscience: models of colonial domination in South Africa," *American Ethnologist*, 16 (1989): 661–85. Comaroff and Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*.
- 12 Dube, *Stitches on Time*; Dube, *After Conversion*.
- 13 K. Sivaramakrishnan, *Modern Forests: Statemaking and Environmental Change in Colonial Eastern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- 14 Anna Davin, "Imperialism and motherhood," *History Workshop*, 5 (1978): 9–65; Comaroff and Comaroff, *Ethnography and Historical Imagination*, pp. 265–95. See also Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).
- 15 Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*; Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994); Mignolo, *Darker Side of the Renaissance*; Stoler, *Race and Education of Desire*; Antoinette M. Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); E. M. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj, c.1800–1947* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001). See also Piya Chatterjee, *A Time for Tea: Women, Labor, and Post/Colonial Politics on an Indian Plantation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).
- 16 Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*.
- 17 van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters*.
- 18 Nancy Rose Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Johannes Fabian, *Language and Colonial Power: The Appropriation of Swahili in the Former Belgian Congo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Rabasa, *Writing Violence on the Northern Frontier*; David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Megan Vaughan, *Curing Their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991); Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*; Goswami, *Producing India*. See also José Rabasa, *Tell Me the Story*

of *How I Conquered You: Elsewheres and Ethnosuicide in the Colonial Mesoamerican World* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011).

19 Fabian, *Out of Our Minds*; Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire, and the Cultures of Travel* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992); Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994); Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995); Tony Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2004); Amiria Henare, *Museums, Anthropology and Imperial Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and John M. MacKenzie, *Museums and Empire: Natural History, Human Cultures and Colonial Identities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

20 Vicente Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); Guha, *Elementary Aspects*; David Scott, *Formations of Ritual: Colonial and Anthropological Discourses on the Sinhala Yaktovil* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism*.

21 Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*; Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories*; Saloni Mathur, *India by Design: Colonial History and Cultural Display* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Pinney, *Camera Indica*; Christopher Pinney, *Photos of the Gods: The Printed Image and Political Struggle in India* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004).

22 Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The “Manly Englishman” and the “Effeminate Bengali” in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Indrani Chatterjee, *Gender, Slavery and Law in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999); Lenore Manderson and Margaret

Jolly (eds.), *Sites of Desire, Economies of Pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*.

- 23 For a wider discussion, see Dube, "Terms that bind."
- 24 Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labour Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Coronil, *The Magical State*; Birla, *Stages of Capital*.
- 25 McClintock, *Imperial Leather*.
- 26 Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*.
- 27 Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Agnani, *Hating Empire Properly*; Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*; Russel A. Berman, *Enlightenment or Empire: Colonial Discourse in German Culture* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*; Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Border of Settler States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); and Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007). See also Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire*.
- 28 Guha, *Elementary Aspects*; Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*; Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*; Pandey, *Remembering Partition*.
- 29 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*; David William Cohen, *The Combing of History* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Klein, *Frontiers of Historical Imagination*. See also Saidiya H. Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007); and Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*.
- 30 For example, Rosaldo, *Ilongot Headhunting*; Rappaport, *Cumbe Reborn*; Florida, *Writing the Past, Inscribing the Future*; David William Cohen and E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, *Siaya: Historical Anthropology* (Cleveland: Ohio University Press, 1989); Price, *First-Time*; Price, *Alabi's World*; Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumour and History in Colonial Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
- 31 I develop these themes in Dube, "Anthropology, history, historical anthropology."
- 32 Redfield, *Space in the Tropics*; Dube, *Stitches on Time*.

33 Vinayak Chaturvedi, *Peasant Pasts: History and Memory in Western India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Deshpande, *Creative Pasts*; Shail Mayaram, *Against History, Against State: Counterperspectives from the Margins* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004); Price, *The Convict and the Colonel*; Ann Gold and Bhoju Ram Gujar, *In the Time of Trees and Sorrows: Nature, Power, and Memory in Rajasthan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Dube, *Untouchable Pasts*; Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*.

34 Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory*.

35 Skaria, *Hybrid Histories*.

36 Ishita Banerjee-Dube, *Religion, Law and Power: Tales of Time in Eastern India, 1860–2000* (London: Anthem Press, 2007).

37 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*; Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity*; Pandey, *Remembering Partition*; Pandey, *Routine Violence*; Ashis Nandy, “History’s forgotten doubles,” *History and Theory*, 34 (1995): 44–66.

38 Recall the discussion of these themes in [Chapter 2](#).

39 For a wider discussion, see Dube, “Anthropology, history, historical anthropology.”

40 Das, *Critical Events*; Malavika Kasturi, *Embattled Identities: Rajput Lineages and the Colonial State in Nineteenth-Century North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002); Dube, *Stitches on Time*; Charu Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, and Community: Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2002).

41 Rao, *The Caste Question*; Shail Mayaram, *Resisting Regimes: Myth, Memory and the Shaping of a Muslim Identity* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997); David Hardiman, *The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987); Guha, *Elementary Aspects*.

42 Skaria, *Hybrid Histories*; Banerjee-Dube, *Religion, Law and Power*.

43 Dube, *Untouchable Pasts*. See also the discussion in [Chapter 2](#).

44 Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), particularly pp. 291–322; Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, *Scandal of the State: Women, Law, and Citizenship in Postcolonial India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

45 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

46 Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*; Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory*; Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*; Pandey, *Remembering Partition*; Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

47 Ana María Alonso, “The politics of space, time, and substance: state formation, nationalism, and ethnicity,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23 (1994): 379–400; Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory*; Butalia, *Other Side of Silence*; Pinney, *Photos of the Gods*; and Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*.

48 See Dube, “Terms that bind,” for a broader discussion.

49 Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*. See also Prakash, *Another Reason*.

50 Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion, and Cultural Nationalism* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001); Sinha, *Specters of Mother India*; Menon and Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries*; Anupama Roy, *Gendered Citizenship: Historical and Conceptual Explorations* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2005).

51 Axel, *Nation's Tortured Body*; Goswami, *Producing India*.

52 Hansen and Stepputat, “Introduction: states of imagination.”

53 Tarlo, *Unsettling Memories*; Hansen, *Wages of Violence*; Bénéri, *Schooling Passions*; Gupta, *Postcolonial Developments*; Gupta, *Red Tape*; and Middleton, *Demands of Recognition*.

54 Connolly, *Ethos of Pluralization*; see also William E. Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

55 S. K. White, *Sustaining Affirmation*, p. 120.

56 Connolly, *Ethos of Pluralization*, pp. 97, 100, emphasis in the original.

57 Following Connolly, *Ethos of Pluralization*, such sites open up spaces for political, ethical, and ontological reflection.

58 Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*; Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*; Dube, *Stitches on Time*.

59 Coronil, *The Magical State*; James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity*; Dube, *After Conversion*; Dube and Banerjee-Dube, *Unbecoming Modern*. See also Mitchell, “The stage of modernity”; Dube, *Enchantments of Modernity*; and Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*.

60 Several of these emphases come together in Laura Bear's remarkable historical anthropology of the Indian railways and the Anglo-Indian community, a pre-eminent "railway caste." She brings to bear on worlds of modernity and identity issues of empire and intimacy, nation and difference, race and sexuality, citizenship and kinship, and subject and self-making. Bear's bid is to detail and describe the generative practices and constitutive meanings of these intermeshed processes by thinking them down to their expressions on the ground. Ever attentive to the spatial specificity and temporal tangibility, contention and contradiction, and ambiguity and murkiness of modernity and identity, her work also imaginatively interweaves the cautious querying, careful unraveling, and prudent affirmation of social worlds. See Bear, *Lines of the Nation*.

