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# Beyond Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism: Diasporic Chinese and Neo-Nationalism in China and Thailand

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It is now popular to see globalization as the spread of a homogeneous political economy that challenges the legitimacy and efficacy of the nation-state. This political economy is attended by a cultural hegemony characterized as Westernization or Americanization. But resistance to such globalization is not limited to a reassertion of the boundaries of the nation-state or protest actions by cosmopolitan social movements. Another group of texts points to diasporic Chinese networks as an authentically Asian form of globalization. The Chinese diaspora is said to have its own highly successful “culture of capitalism.” Rather than pointing to a global political economy, many now talk of a distinct Chinese modernity that has its own unique economic culture.<sup>1</sup>

Though diasporas are hailed as postnational groups who challenge both state sovereignty and global capitalism,<sup>2</sup> overseas Chinese identity itself has been radically unstable for the past 150 years. Beyond simple hyphenations such as Sino-Thai and Chinese-American, the diaspora was called “domestic overseas Chinese” in imperial China, “foreign Orientals” in the Dutch East Indies, “artificial Chinese” and “noble-ized Chinese” in Thailand, and since the 1980s, “pseudo-Chinese”

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1. See Bolt 2000; Clegg, Redding, and Carter 1990; Tu 1994 and 1996; Berger 1988; Redding 1996; Naisbitt 1996; and Ong 1999.

2. Appadurai 1996, 19–21, 165.

in the People's Republic of China (PRC).<sup>3</sup> Though the overseas Chinese network is seen as an "invisible empire" that "knows no borders,"<sup>4</sup> I look to the Sino-Thai experience to see how diasporic Chinese have been involved in defining borders: provincial, national, and transnational.

This article argues two interrelated points, both of which highlight the dynamic interaction between Chinese, Thai, and Sino-Thai identity construction, and the mutual production of domestic and international politics—not just according to shared norms, but in relations of difference. First, I show how neo-nationalism in China and Thailand share the same logic and images: both have used diasporic Chinese as a resource to construct a nationalist self and a foreign Other. Second, the article questions how "nationalism" and "cosmopolitanism" are formulated by arguing against the popular notion of diasporic Chinese as a cosmopolitan community. A series of ethnographies of overseas Chinese in Thailand examines the diversity of 'Chineseness'—as it is articulated in different economic-cultural spaces—to develop a more nuanced understanding of the relations between diaspora, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism. Rather than assimilating or separating themselves from mainstream life, the evidence shows that Sino-Thai communities tend to colonize identity formation in the various local economic cultures, both responding to and developing the prevailing economic context. In Bangkok, they are national nodes for international activity. In coastal Phuket, they are transnational nodes for regional activity. In rural Mahasarakham, they are provincial centers for mercantile capitalism. I argue that a sociological approach that examines national identity in terms of norms and institutions would have missed this economic-cultural dynamic.

The third argument of this article is thus theoretical. One conclusion would be that the diversity of diasporic economic cultures among Sino-Thai populations evades generalization in a curious combination of empiricism (theory is unnecessary because the facts speak for themselves) and relativism (deconstruction shows that anything goes). This article argues that generalizations are possible, but one has to look in different places for a new set of problems and solutions. To understand how nationalism and cosmopolitanism, the global and the local work, one needs to see how the outsiders—in this case, the diaspora—are necessary for constructing communities and producing boundaries. Diasporas thus are not just an economic resource for home and host countries, but are a symbolic resource in the production of cosmopolitanism, nationalism, and localism.

To argue this, I supplement the sociological turn of constructivism that uses identity and norms to fill the cultural gap left by rationalistic international rela-

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3. See Wang 1991 and 1992, 1–10; Reid 1997, 33; Anderson 1991, 122–23; and Kasian 1992, 108. The more common terms for this group—"overseas Chinese" and "diasporic Chinese"—are also problematic (see discussion below). Unless otherwise noted, in this article I use them interchangeably to refer to ethnic Chinese populations who reside outside of the PRC, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

4. See Seagrave 1995; Andrew Tanzer, "Overseas China: The Giant Economy That Knows No Borders," *Forbes*, 18 July 1994, 138.

tions (IR) theory. A sociological approach, for example, might look for common norms of “Asian values” to explain the commonalities shared by Chinese and Thai neo-nationalism. But rather than looking to culture as a substance that has content, anthropological constructivism highlights how culture takes shape in context-sensitive relations between identity and difference. The analysis of diasporic Chinese politics shows that what China and Thailand share is not a common normative identity, but a common set of differences against which their particular national identities are constructed. By shifting the research agenda from norms to difference, anthropological constructivism is better able to consolidate sociological constructivism’s anti-essentialist view of identity and account for transnational politics. Moreover, this article adds to critical notions of diaspora politics—which often bypass the nation-state by jumping from local to global—by figuring the nation back into the local/global dynamic.

These arguments do not, I argue, apply just to an “exotic” Chinese case. Because identities are produced by relations of exclusion in specific contexts, to understand other neo-nationalism, one needs to look at how they are formed by other diasporas. It is necessary to see how the Islamic diaspora in Europe, for example, has recently sparked neo-nationalism in France, England, the Netherlands, and so on. But as this article’s empirical evidence shows, diasporas are not simply an “ethnic problem” that states need to solve through policies of assimilation or multiculturalism. The relations between national identity and diasporas are key to the construction and deconstruction of the seemingly opposite ideologies of nationalism and cosmopolitanism. This ethnographic approach encourages one to look in different places for world politics, shifting away from state actors to transnational nonstate actors, from geopolitics and international political economy (IPE) to economic culture, and from law and institutions as the foundations of international society to the less formal organizations of diasporic public spheres. Diaspora thus not only adds new data to arguments about global/local relations—it helps one question the structures of world politics that look to the opposition between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. Hence “think[ing] of ourselves beyond the nation”<sup>5</sup> is not enough; we also have to think of ourselves beyond the cosmopolitan.

The first section of this article examines in more detail the theoretical issues just raised to argue for an anthropological constructivism to supplement sociological constructivism. The next two sections analyze essential notions of nation-state and diaspora to show how overseas Chinese have been crucial in the production of Chinese and Thai nationalism. The second section thus shows how overseas Chinese are used not just as a financial resource in China to fund revolutions in the past and economic reforms in the present; they have been an important symbolic resource in the construction of Chinese nationalism. The third section examines how diasporic Chinese have been crucial in the construction of Thai national

5. Appadurai 1996, 158.

identity, first as the foreign Other, and more recently as promoters of a more inclusive Thai neo-nationalism.

The fourth section highlights how the diaspora uses the same logic of the relations of difference to form a set of new communities and thus new borders in Thailand. Though they may seem national, one should be clear that these borders are not the juridical-legal territorial borders of the nation-state. They are the economic and cultural borders of various communities in the national center of Bangkok, the transnational node of Phuket, and the rural Mahasarakham province. The ethnographies from these three sites show how diasporic Chinese flexibly respond to political, economic, and cultural opportunities in these contexts, and thus are key elements in the construction of a set of social and economic borders. In this way it encourages one to see identity formation not just in terms of shared norms, but also as the product of borders that are generated in relations of exclusion. These new borders are not simply symbolic constructions; the fourth section shows how Sino-Thai communities are supported by the informal organizations and networks of a diasporic public sphere. The article thus highlights both the dynamic interaction between Chinese, Thai, and Sino-Thai identity construction, and the mutual production of cosmopolitan and national politics.

## **Theoretical Context**

Before questioning the relation of nationalism and cosmopolitanism, it is important to clarify the meanings of diaspora, anthropological constructivism, and economic culture. Diaspora has received much attention in recent years in the humanities and anthropology as a way of understanding the complexities of globalization and transnationalism.<sup>6</sup> Because diasporas—almost by definition—lack political status, they also present epistemological and ontological problems for IR theory that is regulated by states and international regimes.<sup>7</sup> Yet most diaspora research still begins and ends with a comparative examination of national identity. To understand Sino-Thai identity, for example, the two national cultures are related according to the distinction of assimilation/multiculturalism to ask whether the “Chinese identity” has been assimilated into Thai culture—or not. Diasporic Chinese are studied as an “ethnic problem” in the new states of postcolonial Southeast Asia; similar to many Jewish communities in Europe, diasporic Chinese have been criticized as a pariah entrepreneur group that profited from European imperial regimes. Politics is reduced to questions of the loyalty of these “essential outsiders” to their Chinese homeland or their adopted nation. Seen in this way, “Nationalism involves fixing fluid identities, refashioning their representations, and rigidifying the perception of boundaries between the self and the Other.”<sup>8</sup> Sino-

6. See Clifford 1994; Ong 1999; Cheah and Robbins 1998; and Appadurai 1996.

7. Lavie and Swedenburg 1996, 15.

8. Duara 1997, 56.

Thai history thus is not autonomous, but is absorbed into the national historiography of either China or Thailand.<sup>9</sup>

Critical studies of diaspora challenge any natural linkage between nation and state by arguing that cosmopolitan ethnic communities should be defined by neither countries of origin nor host countries. Nonini and Ong, for example, argue that diasporic Chinese have their own “third culture” that is neither purely Chinese nor essentially Thai, but mobile: “different ways of being Chinese are not based on the possession of reified Chinese culture, but on the propensity to seek opportunities elsewhere.”<sup>10</sup> This critical examination of diaspora and cosmopolitanism has highlighted the intimate and specific linkages between the global and the local as well as the interplay of gender, class, and ethnicity.<sup>11</sup> As Wang Gungwu—the dean of overseas Chinese studies—argues, the diaspora is no longer tied to China but is engaged in a “quest for autonomy.”<sup>12</sup>

But the response of diasporic Chinese to the rape and murder of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia in 1998 makes one question such a clear distinction between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. Many of the diasporic Chinese Web sites that now serve as networks for a cosmopolitan community—for example, the World Huaren [Chinese] Federation’s Web site<sup>13</sup>—were initially organized as a response to the Indonesian anti-Chinese atrocities. These diasporic cyber-networks also interacted with mainland Chinese cyber-bulletin boards to pressure the Chinese government in Beijing to respond more forcefully to these events.<sup>14</sup> Hence cosmopolitan networks are here used for nationalist issues, in an interplay of influence: while elite diasporic cosmopolitans (in Southeast Asia, Australia, and North America) were providing information to pressure the Chinese state, elite mainland Chinese nationals were pressuring the same government in support of diasporic Chinese (in Indonesia). Rather than global civil society—which uses universal rights to argue for justice—these groups spoke in terms of Chinese ethnicity in a diasporic public sphere. Thus cosmopolitanism, nationalism, and diaspora are mutually produced first in cyberspace and then in government pronouncements—cyber-campaigns from both inside and outside the PRC pushed Beijing to depart from its policy of diplomatic noninterference to condemn the Indonesian government.

In this article, I argue that such examples show how singular notions of identity—either for nation-states or for diaspora as an autonomous third culture—are not helpful in explaining transnational politics. I question how nationalism and cosmopolitanism are formulated by arguing against the increasingly popular notion

9. See Chirot and Reid 1997; Skinner 1957; Kasian 1992; Cao 1999, 3; and McKeown 1999, 312.

10. See Nonini and Ong 1997, 11, 26; see also Ong 1999, 12–14; and Chan and Tong 2001, 5–7.

11. See Clifford 1994; Cheah and Robbins 1998; Lavie and Swedenburg 1996; Liu 1998, 607; Bao 1998; and Chan and Tong 2001, 6.

12. Wang 2000.

13. See <www.huaren.org>.

14. See Wayne Arnold, “Chinese Diaspora Using Internet to Aid Plight of Brethren Abroad,” *Wall Street Journal*, 23 July 1998; and Hughes 2000, 205–6.

of diasporic Chinese as a postnational cosmopolitan community of “transnational yuppies” who are constantly in motion.<sup>15</sup> Instead of searching for the true Sino-Thai “third culture” in relation to some stable notion of ‘Thai-ness’ and ‘Chinese-ness’, this article shows how diaspora both constructs and deconstructs the seemingly opposing forces of nationalism and cosmopolitanism. Diasporas are a key element in the construction of nationalism and cosmopolitanism, not through an appeal to shared norms, but in the tension between norms and difference, self and Other. To understand how this tension produces communities, it is helpful to turn to anthropology and ethnographic methods to show how borders of territory and identity are negotiated in the social relations of identity and difference.<sup>16</sup>

Before exploring anthropological constructivism, it is helpful to recall the emergence of sociological constructivism in IR theory. Rationalist theories are generally suspicious of cultural arguments; they claim that “identities and norms are either derivative of material capabilities or are deployed by autonomous actors for instrumental reasons.”<sup>17</sup> Hence, culture and norms enter the fray of international politics as variables in the rational calculation of strategic culture.<sup>18</sup> This severely limits the impact of culture on our understanding of IR. As Weber argues for “gender,” treating culture as a variable contains it within hegemonic discourse as an add-on that does not disturb our structures of rationality. By seeing gender “not as something that can be placed, but instead as something that helps us place things,” Weber encourages one likewise to use culture as a way of reconceptualizing politics.<sup>19</sup> Rather than looking at culture and identity as stable “things,” sociological constructivism urges one to see identity as the product of negotiated relations. As Barnett argues for diplomacy in the Middle East, “identity, as a relational construct emerges out of the international and domestic discourse and interactions, imprints security politics and helps us to understand the dynamics of alliance formation.”<sup>20</sup>

As part of a dialogue with rationalist IR theory, the first generation of sociological constructivist texts largely focused their analysis on national security to see how norms guide state policy.<sup>21</sup> More recently, sociological constructivists have broadened the agenda from national security and national interest to nonstate actors and nonmilitary issues. The chapters in *Restructuring World Politics*, for example, expand the arena of international norms beyond the “society of states” to analyze how norms work in “nonstate actors of various kinds.”<sup>22</sup> In particular,

15. Ong 1999, 19, 24, 110–36, 175.

16. Like the “sociological” in sociological constructivism, the “anthropological” in anthropological constructivism does not aim to account for that entire disciplinary field. Following Clifford Geertz, I am using the term to highlight the practices of ethnography and thick description. See Geertz 1993, 5.

17. Katzenstein 1996, 5.

18. See Johnston 1996, 221; and Weldes et al. 1999, 3.

19. Weber 2001, 89.

20. Barnett 1996, 447.

21. Katzenstein 1996; also see Finnemore 1996.

22. Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002, 14.

they chart how transnational networks, coalitions, nongovernmental organizations, and social movements are “makers and managers of meaning” in guiding the norms of world politics.<sup>23</sup>

This extension of sociological constructivism to address transnational social movements is very helpful for the analysis of the politics of cosmopolitanism and diaspora. But the focus on the construction of identity through norms, I argue, only covers half of the relations that produce identity. Sikkink points out that if one accepts that norms are not merely epiphenomena produced by hegemonic states, one needs “to know how these new international norm structures of social purpose are constructed, maintained, and transformed.”<sup>24</sup> To answer this question, I argue that one needs to understand how the self-identity of nationalism depends not just on shared norms, but also on the exclusion of Others such as diasporic groups. To analyze this self/Other relation, one needs to move from sociological constructivism to anthropological constructivism.

Whereas the sociological approach tends to search for “norms” as positive inclusive values—“the fabric that holds pluralistic societies together”—anthropological approaches foreground how communities are formed by excluding difference: security depends on insecurities.<sup>25</sup> Instead of discovering a coherent national culture that could easily be essentialized by rationalists as a discrete “substance,”—a variable that affects state policy—the anthropological approach highlights how identity and difference mutually constitute each other.<sup>26</sup> Rather than looking to culture as a substance that has content, one can see how culture takes shape in context-sensitive relations between identity and difference.

Many sociological constructivists are leaning in this direction. Sikkink acknowledges the mutual construction of self and Other when she notes how “Many norms have both empowering and exclusionary effects.”<sup>27</sup> Barnett more directly looks at how “identity emerges as a consequence of taking into consideration a relevant ‘other.’”<sup>28</sup> In a similar way, Weldes et al. foreground how culture is multiple and “composed of potentially contested codes and representations, as designating a field on which are fought battles over meaning.”<sup>29</sup> These battles between identity and difference thus are not simply clashes between the specific norms of national identities or competing concepts of human rights. Insecurities also come from conceptual differences such as nation/diaspora and nationalism/cosmopolitanism. Rather than just looking to international society or global civil society for trans-

23. *Ibid.*, 11; see also Sikkink 2002, 302.

24. Sikkink 2002, 302.

25. See Kowert and Legro 1996, 454; and Weldes et al. 1999; see also Lapid and Kratochwil 1996; and Krause and Williams 1997.

26. See Weldes et al. 1999, 19; and Appadurai 1996, 12.

27. Sikkink 2002, 310.

28. Barnett 1996, 408.

29. See Weldes et al. 1999, 2; Shapiro 1997, 36; Dirlik 1998; Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002, 14; and Barnett 1996, 408–11. On the other hand, Campbell argues that there are important differences between what I am calling the sociological and the anthropological approaches. Campbell 1998, 212–25.



national politics, one needs to analyze how borders are produced through difference and exclusion in many different local, national, and global contexts. Indeed, the detailed and decentered analysis afforded by an anthropological ethnography enables one to examine how the identity of diasporic Chinese is meaningful not just as an “ethnic problem” in the post–Cold War world. The Chinese diaspora has been crucial for global capitalism, national identity, and provincial politics for more than a century. Diasporas are useful, in other words, just because they are strange. In the context of IR theory, they provide a “crack” that shows the relations of power that constitute both national identity and alternatives to it.<sup>30</sup>

This ethnographic approach to the transnational politics of diaspora allows one to look in different places for evidence. For example, the reigning paradigms for the political economy of East Asia typically do not emphasize cultural elements—developmental state theory and neoclassical economics typically are transfixed by struggles between the state and the market.<sup>31</sup> This article builds on recent studies that highlight the interplay of political economy and culture in regional and transnational politics to examine diasporic economic culture.<sup>32</sup> It is popular to argue that overseas Chinese capitalism, also known as Confucian capitalism, relies on the economic culture of “a positive attitude toward the affairs of the world, a sustained lifestyle of discipline and self-cultivation, respect for authority, frugality, and an overriding concern for stable family life.”<sup>33</sup> The small and medium-sized family firms of Chinese capitalism are noted for their flexibility and quick decision making. Together, these values describe a network capitalism that works according to *guanxi*-relationships between diasporic Chinese entrepreneurs and officials in the PRC. The comparative advantage of the diaspora’s Confucian capitalism is that cultural ties lower the transaction costs of doing business in China where the legal system is underdeveloped. Rather than just looking to formal institutional regimes that are state-based, economic culture also allows one to examine how the informal practices of everyday life produce nationalism and cosmopolitanism.

Yet economic culture as a set of “core values” is conceptually problematic: it has been used as shorthand to explain both the unique transnational characteristics that produced the Asia economic miracle and the unique Thai values that resist globalization.<sup>34</sup> But when one uses an anthropological approach that examines politics in terms of the tension between identity and difference, rather than identity and norms, one can see that the *guanxi* network of relationships is not simply between ethnic Chinese, and for economic gain. An examination of the relations between identity and difference shows how diasporic insecurities produce identity

30. See Weldes et al. 1999, 17, 20; Marcus 1999, xi; and Shapiro 1997.

31. See Robison et al., 2000; Woo-Cumings 1999; and World Bank 1993.

32. See Cumings 1999; Dirlík 1998; Katzenstein 1997; Ong 1999; Shapiro and Alker 1996; Appadurai 1996; and Nonini and Ong 1997.

33. See Berger 1988, 7–8; and Bolt 2000.

34. See Tu 1996; Berger 1988; and Pasuk and Baker 2000, 210.



in both its nationalist and cosmopolitan forms. As I show, these boundaries are not territorial, but cultural and economic; power is not measured just according to military force and economic growth, but according to the diasporic public sphere's "cultural arsenals" of temples, fraternal organizations, newspapers, and schools.<sup>35</sup> Economic culture, therefore, is a useful way of describing culture as a set of practices rather than a set of ideas.

To understand how diaspora both constructs and deconstructs nationalism and cosmopolitanism, one needs to employ a critical use of the anthropological approach. The weakness of an anthropological approach is the opposite of state-centric IR theory: it tends to bypass the state by jumping directly from the tribal to the postnational, the local to the global. Hence, the next two sections examine the role of diaspora in the production of the borders of nation-states.

### **Chinese Identity: Neo-Nationalism and Diaspora**

The Chinese diaspora has always been a problematic concept. As either nationalists or cosmopolitans, overseas Chinese have been measured against the norm of a single and coherent culture. The policy choices of assimilation and multiculturalism both look to a core of Chinese culture that is either modified or preserved. Wang Gungwu's problems in even naming this population are indicative: the first substantive footnotes in many of his essays lament the difficulty of defining 'Chineseness' or naming the overseas Chinese.<sup>36</sup> But rather than trying to define overseas Chinese as a coherent "thing," one needs to understand their identity as a relation. This section argues that the nation and the diaspora are not separate autonomous "substances" with core identities; rather, Chinese nationalism and diaspora take on meaning in relation to each other. Indeed, the concepts of "nationalism" and "overseas Chinese" both appeared at the end of the nineteenth century, and I argue that this was not a coincidence: nationalism and cosmopolitanism produced each other in tension. In this section then, I first examine how Chinese nationalism is not regulated by a collection of core values as many texts explain; identity has been produced against the difference of Western empire, Chinese empire, and diasporic Chinese. This is not simply a history lesson, for the dynamic of nationalism and cosmopolitanism is again producing Chinese identity in familiar ways. For the past fifteen years, PRC policy has been not simply to recruit overseas Chinese as patriotic investors, but to reeducate the diaspora in their national history.

Since the 1990s, nationalism has once again become a major topic in Chinese politics, with many security studies analysts searching for the guiding norms of Chinese civilization. One needs to understand the hyper-realism of Chinese foreign policy, for example, not just according to the economic analysis of the Chi-

35. Duara 1997, 50; also see Appadurai 1996, 4.

36. Wang 1991, 216, 236, 253.

nese state as a rational actor, but according to exotic culture and history.<sup>37</sup> In both academic and popular culture within China itself, the rise of nationalism has likewise been accompanied by a rediscovery of China's glorious 5,000-year civilization. National Studies Fever—*Guoxue re*—in the 1990s stressed the achievements of the Chinese nation in a very positive way. But this new nationalism also created new enemies: Guoxue's nativist search for "authentic" ways of being Chinese can be both anti-modern and anti-Western.<sup>38</sup>

The timing of this rediscovery of Chinese nationalism is important. In the early 1990s, the PRC faced political and economic crises both domestically with the Tiananmen massacre, and globally with the fall of the Soviet Union. Though the economic reform policy was reasserted in 1992, the political struggle was resolved in favor of a neoconservative nationalism. The PRC has particular ways of promoting this new form of nationalism. While positive notions of identity proliferated via Guoxue, a more negative production of identity has also been prominent. The 1990s also saw the reappearance of the discourse of National Humiliation. Like Guoxue, it first became prominent in the 1910s and 1920s as China faced the twin challenges of imperialism and modernity. While Guoxue addressed the problems of modernity, National Humiliation—*Guochi*—addressed the problem of imperialism.<sup>39</sup> To understand neo-nationalism and national security, it is necessary to understand national insecurities. In other words, one needs to reverse Paul Kennedy's famous thesis about "the rise and fall of the great powers" to examine the "fall and rise" of China.

Chinese textbooks characteristically talk of the "Century of National Humiliation" to define modern Chinese history and to celebrate the foundation of the PRC in 1949. National Salvation thus does not make sense separate from National Humiliation. The discourse of National Humiliation recounts how, at the hands of foreign invaders and corrupt Chinese regimes, sovereignty was lost, territory dismembered, and the Chinese people thus humiliated. The Opium War—whereby the British navy pried open the Chinese empire to Western capitalism—is usually seen as the beginning of the Century of National Humiliation, and the communist revolution in 1949 as the end. As a key patriotic education textbook puts it: "Never forget National Humiliation. . . . The invasion of the imperialist powers and the domestic reactionary ruling class's corrupt stupidity together created the roots of this catastrophe."<sup>40</sup>

Thus the foreign Other is not the only focus of National Humiliation. The Chinese nation has its problems too. The primary contradiction of foreign imperialism was exacerbated by the ineptitude of the various regimes that preceded the PRC: the misdeeds of the Qing dynasty and the republican regime are summa-

37. See Swaine and Tellis 2000; Zheng 1999; Johnston 1996; and Dittmer and Kim 1993.

38. See Zheng 1999, 157.

39. For an early discussion of the dynamic between Guoxue and National Humiliation, see Hou 1915.

40. Guo 1996, 126.

rized as “domestic corrupt stupidity.” This is not simply a battle against a different race (the Qing were Manchu) or different ideology (the republican leaders were from the rival political party), because both of these groups are condemned as Chinese traitors who “sold out the nation.” The conclusion that the discourse of National Humiliation draws is that the Chinese people need a strong state to save the nation from evil imperialists: past, present, and future. This discourse is very popular in both official and popular culture in China. Long after the century ended in 1949, National Humiliation springs up in conversation and public opinion to explain diplomatic crises such as the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade (1999), campaigns to host the Olympics (1993 and 2001), and the crash of the EP-3 surveillance plane (2001). Thus National Humiliation discourse uses modern Chinese history to secure the Chinese people to a particular territory. This essentialist construction of identity takes both Chinese people and Chinese territory as self-evident categories. National Humiliation forcefully reasserts the hyphen between nation and state.<sup>41</sup>

### *Diasporic Identity*

There was also a rebirth of overseas Chinese identity in the late 1980s because of two factors that accompanied Deng’s economic reforms. The open-door policy allowed a host of “new immigrants” to leave China. It also invited the older generation of wealthy overseas Chinese to return and invest in their homeland as part of the economic network of “Greater China.”<sup>42</sup> Overseas Chinese identity has been involved in a cosmopolitan dynamic that largely bypasses not just Southeast Asian nation-states, but the PRC as well. Popular business authors such as John Naisbitt, and noted academics such as Tu Weiming, have stressed that Greater China and overseas Chinese economic success need to be understood separately from Beijing’s centralized political control. Naisbitt writes, “It is not China. It is the Chinese network” to explain the grand shift in economic activity from nation-states to networks. In the early 1990s, Tu likewise noted the “glaring absence of the PRC” in East Asian success stories, and argued that now the “periphery [that is, the Chinese diaspora] sets the agenda for the center.”<sup>43</sup>

In this section I argue that one also needs to consider how diasporic identity is produced in relation to the nation-state. The PRC has labored to see ‘Chineseness’ as an essential identity tied to its state. The relation of overseas identity and do-

41. For a more detailed discussion of National Humiliation and international politics, see Callahan forthcoming (b).

42. It is common to assume that Western multinational corporations (MNCs) are the main investors in China. But diasporic Chinese (including Taiwan and Hong Kong) account for around 80 percent of foreign direct investment in the PRC. This is significant to the global political economy because the PRC is the second-ranking host country for foreign investment after the United States. See Bolt 2000, 3, 9, 1; Callahan forthcoming (a); and Shambaugh 1995.

43. See Naisbitt 1996, 7; and Tu 1994, 12.

mestic nationalism is shown in the creation of the term for overseas Chinese, *huaqiao*. Though Chinese have been traveling abroad for millennia, the creation of a single term to name this group is quite recent, taking form at the same time that nationalism gained currency in China. Before 1893, there was a legal ban on overseas travel. The government saw unofficial travelers as “vagabonds, fugitives, or outlaws” who risked punishment as criminals on returning to China.<sup>44</sup> The constitution of *huaqiao* identity is not just part of the production of Chinese nationalism, but is related to National Humiliation. Historically, Chinese only migrated in large numbers as a result of the economic and political dislocation that started with the “invasion of foreign countries’ capitalism” after the Opium War.<sup>45</sup> As Wang argues, the term *huaqiao* was crafted by the Qing regime “to encourage sojourners to identify with China and Chinese civilization.”<sup>46</sup> Though *huaqiao* was a new word, it had an ancient pedigree that framed the overseas Chinese as an “elegant and respectable” group.<sup>47</sup> Thus in the late nineteenth century, overseas Chinese were transformed from outlaws into honored mandarins as part of an imperial nationalism.

In the late twentieth century, overseas Chinese are again being recruited into the narrative of National Humiliation as patriotic “sons of the Yellow Emperor” who thus form “a part of China’s history which is splattered with blood and tears.”<sup>48</sup> Thus the Chinese state is trying to not only lure overseas Chinese investment into the PRC, but also to reeducate the diaspora in National Humiliation history. Official National Humiliation texts are increasingly co-published in Hong Kong in traditional Chinese characters for overseas distribution. Specialized texts have been directed squarely at Hong Kong and diasporic audiences to knit them into official nationalism. For example, in the preface to a slick National Humiliation text, the director of the Chinese Revolutionary History Museum in Beijing explains that the book “will help overseas Chinese, especially our young friends overseas, to understand this period of the motherland’s history.”<sup>49</sup>

Mainland descriptions of the overseas Chinese experience neatly mirror the logic of National Humiliation discourse. Similar to Guo’s patriotic education textbook cited above, Ren and Zhao list the reasons for the diaspora as stemming from both foreign invasion and domestic corruption: “among the foreign reasons we must stress the frenzied plunder of China’s cheap labor by the foreign invaders, among the domestic reasons we must stress the basic corruption and ineptitude of the Qing government, which was powerless to protect our people from the foreign

44. See Wang 2000, 43; and McKeown 1999, 323.

45. See Ren and Zhao 1999, 2; and Wang 1992.

46. Wang 2000, 47.

47. See Wang 46; and Duara 1997, 42–43.

48. Ren and Zhao 1999, 380–81, 1.

49. Shen 1997, 7. This museum is one of the important institutions of the discourse of National Humiliation. To see how it framed the mainland Chinese understanding of the return of Hong Kong, see Callahan forthcoming (a), chap. 6.

invaders' human trafficking."<sup>50</sup> Chinese identity thus expands, via National Humiliation, from being defined according to citizenship and territoriality to a wider transnational view of the Chinese race: "China is not just the most populous country in the world; it also has the most populous diaspora."<sup>51</sup> According to these sources, the 25 million diasporic Chinese constitute the third largest economy in the world. Overseas Chinese are therefore characteristically figured as a financial resource for the Chinese nationalist project. This financial aid has also lent the various revolutions and regimes added symbolic legitimacy: the PRC and Taiwan still struggle for the loyalty of overseas Chinese as part of their transnational, national reunification strategies.<sup>52</sup>

The national shame, therefore, is not just about the loss of the Chinese body politic where imperialist powers divided up the "sacred territory," but of the loss of many Chinese bodies. The purpose of founding a strong nation was not just to reunify China, but to protect diasporic Chinese who otherwise "deeply know the shame and pain of a weak country." Hence, according to mainland sources, overseas Chinese understand that "their own destiny is wrapped up in the destiny of the motherland."<sup>53</sup> Indeed, the language of National Humiliation is key in mainland understandings of diaspora. Persecution of Chinese overseas during the Century of National Humiliation was not just physical or financial, but a question of "respect"—or the lack of it: "If Chinese people were bullied locally, that was because China received no respect internationally."<sup>54</sup> The rape of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia was therefore seen as a measure of the diplomatic weakness of the PRC. Overseas Chinese experience thus not only becomes a chapter in the history of National Humiliation textbooks as a problem to be solved, but as a "reflection of the development of modern Chinese history" itself.<sup>55</sup>

Diasporic Chinese are therefore not simply a financial resource for China. The dynamic of diasporic persecution and National Humiliation is used as a symbolic resource for producing Chinese national identity. Curiously, these financial and symbolic resources, which are transnational and deterritorialized in diaspora, are used to consolidate the identity of the Chinese nation. The more obvious the national difference abroad, the greater the need for a strong Chinese state to protect the diaspora both diplomatically and militarily. It is common to conclude that diasporic Chinese nationalism ended in the 1950s, with the end of immigration from the PRC and the rise of postcolonial nationalism in Southeast Asia.<sup>56</sup> But nationalism continues to grow both at home and abroad. Over the past century, a series

50. See Ren and Zhao 1999, 5; and Yang 1991, 47.

51. Ren and Zhao 1999, 380.

52. Wang 2000, 67. This is the main topic of Ren and Zhao 1999.

53. Ren and Zhao 1999, 9.

54. See McKeown 1999, 326; and Yang 1991, 45.

55. See Liang 1999, 25–31; Li and Peng 1995, 61–82; Jiang 1927, 281–93; Yang 1991, 43; and Ding 1999.

56. Wang 1991.

of atrocities provoked national outrage among new and old immigrants: at the turn of the twentieth century by anti-Chinese immigration policies in North America and Australasia, in the mid-twentieth century by the Anti-Japanese War and the Rape of Nanjing, and at the turn of the twenty-first century by the rape and murder of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. In each of these cases, the national and the cosmopolitan produce each other, regardless of whether it is the diaspora protesting national problems or the nation protesting diasporic problems. In other words, though one often assumes that nationalism is defined by positive norms, there is nothing like a humiliating atrocity to unite a diverse and dispersed population into a community.<sup>57</sup> In addition to gathering around glorious Chinese civilization, diasporic Chinese communities increasingly identify with the National Humiliation of such atrocities. As Buruma sarcastically concludes, "It is, it appears, not enough for Chinese-Americans to be seen as the heirs of a great civilization; they want to be recognized as heirs of their very own Holocaust."<sup>58</sup> Hence, overseas Chinese not only network for economic gain in a mobile "third culture," but for social and political projects as well, to produce a transnational form of nationalism.

The next section turns these questions around—first to see how diasporic Chinese have been used in a negative way to produce Thai nationalism. It then examines how Sino-Thai have been among the most vociferous supporters of an inclusive neo-nationalism since 1997. This argument reconfirms how nationalism depends on cosmopolitan Chinese, and how diaspora is more than a financial resource. It has had considerable symbolic power in constructing and deconstructing the Thai nation.

## **Diaspora and Neo-Nationalism in Thailand**

Nationalism in Thailand has a time-honored tradition of using diasporic Chinese as the Other against which the 'Thai-ness' is defined. Overseas Chinese were not just the fifth column of republican and then communist revolution in China. They also have been a key element in the formation of Thai nationalism. While Chinese nationals banded together with the diaspora to fight against Western imperialism in the Century of National Humiliation, in Thailand, the Chinese have been used as a symbolic resource in national identity construction in a negative way: the "essential outsider" against whom a national self is constructed.<sup>59</sup> Especially after the Chinese republican revolution of 1911 and communist revolution in 1949, the Thai elite questioned the loyalty and utility of their large urban Chinese population. To stem the spread of republican revolutionary ideas in the 1910s and communist ideology in the 1950s, the Thai state strengthened its policy of regulating

57. See Clifford 1994; and Chaliand and Rageau 1997.

58. Ian Buruma, "The Joys and Perils of Victimhood," *New York Review of Books*, 8 April 1999, 4.

59. Chirot and Reid 1997.

the Chinese population, especially Chinese education.<sup>60</sup> Most famously, King Rama VI wrote “Jews of the Orient” (1914) as part of Thailand’s transition from a multi-ethnic empire into an exclusive nation-state.<sup>61</sup> According to the Thai officials, “Sino-Thai” was a contradiction in terms: you had to be one or the other. Diasporic Chinese nationalism thus both preceded and provoked nationalism in Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines.<sup>62</sup>

Most studies of overseas Chinese identity overlook this negative use of the diaspora by highlighting how Thailand has been accommodating to diasporic Chinese as fellow Buddhists—at least when compared with harsher regimes in the neighboring Islamic societies of Malaysia and Indonesia.<sup>63</sup> For example, Prime Minister Gen. Chaovalit Yongchaiyut tried to blame Sino-Thai capitalists for the 1997 economic meltdown, calling them “the nation’s problem.” Though this was a very successful diversionary measure in other countries—the state encouraged anti-Chinese riots in Indonesia to save Suharto—it did not work in Thailand. After a public outcry, Chaovalit apologized and complained that he had been misunderstood.<sup>64</sup> This rapid about-face showed the power of the Sino-Thai, who are now not only businesspeople, but also journalists, academics, and civil servants. Actually, it is easier to study diasporic Chinese in Malaysia, where difference has been institutionalized into the official ethnic categories of Malay, Chinese, and Indian. But as this section shows, Thailand is a useful site to examine diasporic Chinese identity production just because of the ambiguous nature of the distinction between Chinese and Thai. As Chaovalit’s awkward experience shows, people have to work hard to make distinctions between the Chinese, Thai, and Sino-Thai populations.

While neo-nationalism arose in China to address a political crisis—the end of the Cold War and the Tiananmen massacre—in Thailand, neo-nationalism became an issue because of an economic crisis. Because of a range of factors that have been well-analyzed elsewhere, the Thai economy abruptly slipped from four decades of uninterrupted growth into a world-class depression in July 1997.<sup>65</sup> Once the Thai baht was floated on international currency markets, it lost half its value, spurring the Thai government to secure a \$17 billion rescue package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These funds came with the conditionality of a structural adjustment of the Thai political economy that stressed policy and institutional reforms that would promote open markets and good governance. The Thai government passed a raft of bills to reform bankruptcy and foreclosure laws, and to loosen up restrictions on foreign ownership. The result was the closure of

60. See *Thirakruet phiti* 1999, 92–93; Wang 1992; and Chan and Tong 2001.

61. Asavabahu 1941.

62. Reid 1997, 51.

63. See Skinner 1957; and Chan and Tong 2001.

64. Chang Noi, “Revisiting Dark Corners of Our Political Past,” *The Nation* (Bangkok), 24 September 1997; see also Kasian 1999, 33–37.

65. See Robison et al. 2000.



three-quarters of the finance companies and the nationalization of four of Thailand's major banks, which altogether wiped out one-third of Thailand's financial system. Additionally, 69,000 other companies needed debt restructuring. Multi-national corporations (MNCs) from Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, Europe, and the United States bought Thai assets at "fire sale" prices. At the nadir of the crisis in 1998, the economy contracted by 9 percent, poverty rose by 20 percent, and unemployment to more than 2 million.<sup>66</sup>

### *Economics and Neo-Nationalism*

The first political reaction to the 1997 economic crisis in Thailand was not the expected nationalism that would target the usual suspects, the overseas Chinese. Instead, Thai public intellectuals created a new set of Others: liberals and the West. According to the neo-nationalists, the solution to the 1997 economic crisis was not a financial restructuring, but a reassertion of Thai national identity and economy. Thai neo-nationalism trumpeted the notion of economic and cultural self-sufficiency that often romanticized the Buddhist village community as part of its rejection of urbanism, consumerism and industrialism.

Neo-nationalism in Thailand thus uses a similar set of images to Chinese neo-nationalism: Thai as slaves to foreigners, the semi-colonialism of economic imperialism, and immoral foreign robber-barons. While treaties signed between 1842 and 1949 were seen as unequal and thus illegitimate in China's Century of National Humiliation, Thai foreign debt in 1997 was framed as illegitimate. Once again, foreign invasion and domestic corruption—the debts that the Thai public had to pay—were created by the exploitative policies of the West in collaboration with the corrupt elite in Bangkok.<sup>67</sup> The purpose of Thai neo-nationalism is to "save the nation" from such corrupt traitors who risked "selling out the nation." Indeed, the United Thai for National Salvation Club was formed in 2000 to argue this case. This club sponsored a special issue of *Political Economy*, "The Declaration of Neo-Nationalism," which was published to influence the political campaign for the January 2001 general election—which was won by a "nationalist" party.<sup>68</sup>

Though it is easy to write off Thai neo-nationalism as a knee-jerk populist reaction to a painful crisis that was used instrumentally by some political parties, it is important to understand it in its full complexity. This neo-nationalism gathered together an often contradictory group of promoters from political, economic and

66. See Hewison 2000b; and Pasuk and Baker 2000.

67. See Khamprakat haeng yuksamai 2000, 13ff; Pasuk and Baker 2000; and Prapat et al. 2000, 225–28.

68. Numerous articles in newspapers and magazines were published on the topic, as well as a special issue of another Thai journal, *New Politics*, which is much more critical of neo-nationalism. Chatniyom 2001. It is noteworthy that the neo-nationalist articles appeared in *Political Economy*, a journal otherwise known for its critical left-wing perspective.

civil society: the monarchist/bureaucratic elite, national business leaders, and progressive grassroots activists all called for a return to a national/local economy. Some criticized economic liberalization to promote social justice for the poor and oppressed, others—including businesspeople—expanded the criticism of globalization to target the immorality of capitalism and consumerism more generally.<sup>69</sup> Utopian views of the Thai Buddhist village community culture can serve two purposes. On the one hand, they have been part of this localist notion of economic culture, but on the other, they have been used by conservative institutions to promote the authoritarian linkage of “Nation, Religion, and Monarchy” first proposed by King Rama VI. For example, in 1998 the Ministry of the Interior tried to turn the grassroots social democracy of neo-nationalism into yet another top-down development strategy.<sup>70</sup>

Actually, the neo-nationalists did not engage in a debate about the merits of alternative development strategies—they did not present an economic plan.<sup>71</sup> Even the “nationalist” prime minister who was elected in January 2001 did not have a coherent nationalist economic policy: sometimes he praised self-sufficiency, other times he promoted foreign investment and an export-oriented economy. But rather than looking at what divides these various strands of neo-nationalism, it is important to see how neo-nationalism only makes sense in terms of its relation to the Other. The progressive, bourgeois, and reactionary nationalists—who fundamentally disagree about most issues in Thai politics—are unified here by a common target: foreign capitalism, specifically the IMF. As one newspaper columnist put it, “This new nationalism is the child of the IMF’s [Managing Director] Michel Camdessus. . . .”<sup>72</sup> According to this argument, the issues are not about the political economy of class and capitalism, but the economic culture of territory and citizenship. The president of the Thai Senate proclaimed, “the poor, struggling, indebted Thai are threatened by rich, foreign creditors.”<sup>73</sup> Thus Thai business, even if it is a “monopoly or oligopoly,” is seen by neo-nationalists as virtuous because the wealth still stays in the country.<sup>74</sup> Likewise, all the neo-nationalist groups looked to Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir’s strong mercantilist response to the crisis. Malaysia’s capital controls were praised more for their ideological meaning than their economic efficacy: Mahathir was hailed because he did not bow to the IMF. This support was a major shift for many of the progressive neo-nationalists who previously had been critical of Mahathir’s authoritarian politics.<sup>75</sup>

69. See McCargo 2001; Hewison 2000a; Pasuk and Baker 2000; Wittayakorn 2000; Narong Chokwattana 2000; Chatthip and Siriphorn 2000; and Kasian 1999, 41.

70. See Ministry of the Interior 1998; and Hewison 2000a, 290.

71. See Hewison 2000a, 291; and Chang Noi, “Nationalism and White Peril,” *The Nation* (Bangkok), 13 November 2000.

72. Chang Noi, “Nationalism and White Peril,” *The Nation* (Bangkok), 13 November 2000.

73. *The Nation* (Bangkok), 12 February 1998.

74. Narong Pechprasert in Nantiya Tangwisutjit “Rethinking Nationalism: Is It Always Evil?” *The Nation* (Bangkok), 5 November 2000.

75. See Amarin 2000; Pasuk and Baker 2000, 176; and Hewison 2001b, 220.

Those in Thailand who questioned the efficacy or ethics of neo-nationalism were summarily dismissed as “naïve,” “weak, stupid, and morally cowardly,” “crazily following Western slogans of liberalization, globalization, and accountability,” “stupidly following foreigners,” “being brainwashed by foreigners,” “childishly liberal,” “alarmist and frankly intolerant,” and “blindly following the global system.”<sup>76</sup> In its more extreme form, neo-nationalism dismisses those who supported a liberal political economy not only as stupid, but as un-Thai traitors who wished to “sell the country.”<sup>77</sup> One commentator approvingly notes how traitors who sold out the country to Burma in the late eighteenth century were beheaded under King Taksin.<sup>78</sup>

### *Democracy and Neo-Nationalism*

The Thai do not have to go back 200 years for examples of a violent enforcement of nationalism. Many of these same activists and opinion-makers were victims of the Thai state’s criminalization of difference in the recent past. Up until 1973, nationalism in Thailand was largely used as a tool by a series of military dictatorships to repress left-wing movements. Even after the popular democracy interregnum of 1973–76, progressive politics has largely been understood as anti-military or pro-democracy rather than as pro-nationalist.

Memories of a repressive anti-Chinese nationalism were still fresh just before the economic crisis in 1997. Reacting to renewed calls for a right-wing nationalism that excluded Sino-Thai as communists, Kasian Tejapira wrote:

Thai has many forms. There are communist Thai, fascist Thai, democratic Thai, dictator Thai, Free Thai, and tyrant Thai. Now I am no longer a communist, but I want to insist that communists are also Thai in the same way as fascists are Thai. Therefore Thai who have different ideas should try to express their ideas peacefully instead of shooting M16s from helicopters or firing rounds from tanks.<sup>79</sup>

Here Kasian is part of the general movement among a new generation of Thai neo-nationalists to be more inclusive and democratic. It is noteworthy that many of the essays go out of their way to cite as authorities progressive nationalist heroes such as Pridi Phanomyong, rather than militant nationalists such as Field Marshalls P. Phibulsongkram (Phibul) and Sarit Thanarat. Indeed, many of the same people who were pushing for liberal or grassroots democracy in the early 1990s (against military dictatorship) now argued for a democratic nationalism (against

76. Author’s interview with Chaiwat Satha-Anand, Bangkok, 14 December 2000; Prapat et al. 2000, 225–28; Dej 2000; Somchai 2000; Pasuk and Baker 2000, 215; and Chang Noi, “Nationalism and White Peril,” *The Nation* (Bangkok), 13 November 2000.

77. See Khamprakat haeng yuksamai 2000, 18–22; Narong Chokwattana 2000, 94–95; Kasian 1999, 41; and Pasuk and Baker 2000, 161ff.

78. Likhit 2000; also see Amarin Khoman, “Unctad Go Home!” *Bangkok Post*, 13 February 2000.

79. Kasian 1999, 197; also see Chang Noi, “Revisiting Dark Corners of Our Political Past,” *The Nation* (Bangkok), 24 September 1997; Chatniyom 2001.

economic imperialism). In this way, the criticisms of corruption are not simply defining domestic enemies but entail a critical engagement with reform politics and extra-parliamentary popular politics. Many of the more thoughtful writers are trying to pry nationalism away from the military and bureaucratic elite to guide popular democracy. The Nation is defined by the elements of the people, liberty, and justice.<sup>80</sup>

### *Race and Neo-Nationalism*

Certainly, Thai nationalism has been involved in racial politics. This can be graphically seen in the change of names by the militarist regime in 1939: “Siam” named a multiethnic country, while “Thai-land” is racially exclusive. Neo-nationalists are quite aware of the anti-Chinese history of their ideology. But their reaction since 1997 has not been to reject nationalism, as many progressives had in the past, but to embrace an explicitly inclusive form of Thai nationalism. Unlike in China, where neo-nationalism is closely related to ethnicity, the key here to being Thai is not pure Thai blood, but citizenship and participation in Thai life. Thus “genuine nationalism” is differentiated from racism.<sup>81</sup>

Part of this shift toward toleration is practical. Even if the Thai elite desired to once again discriminate against diasporic Chinese, logistically it would be very difficult—as Chaovalit saw in 1997. In the past, “Chinese” lived in certain communities—Chinatowns—and engaged in certain businesses. But now Chinese and Thai have intermixed to such an extent that they are difficult to differentiate. Authentic ‘Thai-ness’ is not just an ideological non-issue, but a racial non-issue as well. As Kasian Tejapira, a key theorist of both neo-nationalism and Sino-Thai identity, argues:

The ultranationalist history cannot blame the economic crisis in the 1990s on the Sino-Thai because Thailand in 1998 is much different from Thailand during Phibul era of sixty years ago. During Phibul’s era, the nationalist movement was anti-Chinese. The imaginary lines that divided between Thai and Chinese were possible. But by now, “Chineseness” has been assimilated into “Thai-ness” and cannot be easily separated. Therefore now it is difficult to draw a line to divide *Jek* [Chinese] from the Thai and claim that *Jek* are the national enemies. The boundary of the definition of Thai-ness has already expanded to include *Jek* to unite with the Thai. . . .<sup>82</sup>

80. See Narong Chokwattana in Chatniyom 2001, 24; Dej 2000; Whittiyakorn 2000; Kasian 1999; and Nidhi Aoesriwong in Chatniyom 2001, 9.

81. See Kasian 1997, 88; Likhit 2000; Amarin 2000; Nantiya Tangwisutijit “Rethinking Nationalism: Is It Always Evil?” *The Nation* (Bangkok), 5 November 2000; and Kasian 1999.

82. Kasian 1999, 40–41; also see author’s interview with Suwanna Satha-Anand, Bangkok, 27 August 1999; author’s interviews in Phuket, December 2000. Kasian here is reworking the derogatory *Jek*—better translated as “Chink”—into a positive part of Thai society.

But this seemingly cosmopolitan nationalism is not completely differentiated from racism. While Sino-Thai commentators extended the shared norms of Thai national identity to include Chinese and other non-Thai ethnic groups, this expansion of the self has necessitated the creation of a new Other. The new racism targets the West, and is often anti-American.

This new Occidentalism arose in a specific context: in 1998, parliament debated the new bankruptcy and foreclosure laws at the same time that it modified the Alien Business Law. Hence many Thai felt that the government was simply selling Thailand to Western MNCs—and cheaply. Actually, many of the buyers were from fellow Asian countries: Japan, Singapore, and Taiwan.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, it is not just foreign firms that are preying on a prostrate Thailand. Thai firms have also gone transnational: Thailand's CP Group is the largest foreign investor in China.<sup>84</sup> Likewise, a "Manifesto of Neo-nationalism" laments that the Thai have lost their transnational capitalist opportunities: "I see that Singaporeans, Hong Kongers and Taiwanese own many businesses in our neighbouring countries such as Burma, Cambodia and Laos. What a pity that the Thai have lost these opportunities."<sup>85</sup> But such political-economic arguments miss the point, because the issue was the economic culture of Thai identity that was framed in racial terms: neo-nationalism was not simply anti-American, but anti-White. Rather than talking about the Yellow Peril of a Chinese threat to Thailand, as King Rama VI did in 1914, now there are warnings of the "White Peril."<sup>86</sup> Similar to National Humiliation in China, the problem is not simply the IMF or liberalism, but the barbaric White race that is trying (once again) to subjugate the vulnerable Asian masses.<sup>87</sup>

Thus a new Thai self is produced by a new Other in much the same way as National Salvation in China needs National Humiliation. With the economic crisis of 1997, neo-nationalism arose not as a positive movement hailing the glories of the core values of Thai culture—Nation, Religion, and Monarchy—in official discourse, but in relation to difference. Much the same logic and vocabulary was used as in previous incarnations of Thai hyper-nationalism, but this time with a twist: Sino-Thai activists were among the most prominent promoters of an inclusive and democratic neo-nationalism. But this new broader nationalism still depends on difference; the Other is the "White Peril" of the IMF and the West. Thai neo-nationalism, therefore, is similar to Chinese neo-nationalism in terms of logic that produces identity via relations of exclusion, if not in terms of content—this national unification is of the Thai citizenry rather than the Chinese race.

83. See Hewison 2000b, 219; Pasuk and Baker 2000, 218.

84. Ampalavanar-Brown 1998, 611.

85. Wichit 2000, 224; also Chang Noi, "Nationalism and White Peril," *The Nation* (Bangkok), 13 November 2000.

86. See Suthachai 2000, 68; Chang Noi, "Nationalism and White Peril," *The Nation* (Bangkok), 13 November 2000; and Narong Phechprasert in Nantiya Tangwisutijit "Rethinking Nationalism: Is It Always Evil?" *The Nation* (Bangkok), 5 November 2000.

87. See Khamprakat haeng yuksamai 2000, 22–26; Likhit 2000; Surat 2000; Wichit 2000, 221ff; and Kasian 1999, 41.

## Diasporic Chinese in Thailand

The first two sections have deconstructed essential notions of nation-state and diaspora to show how diasporic Chinese have been crucial in the production of Chinese and Thai nationalism. While cosmopolitan Chinese activities involve transnational flows of capital, populations, and information, they are not only postnationalist disjunctures that call boundaries into question. In the previous sections, I showed how cosmopolitanism and nationalism produce each other. This section highlights how the diaspora forms a set of new communities and thus new borders. Though they may seem national, one should be clear that these are not the territorial borders of the nation-state, so much as economic and cultural borders of various communities. Thus the evidence shows how identity is produced through constructing borders of self and Other, not just for the most obvious case of national identity, but in relations of exclusion in local and transnational contexts as well. The new borders are not simply symbolic constructions; as I illustrate, they are supported by nonstate actors' "concrete institutions and networks."<sup>88</sup>

More importantly, these communities show how problematic Thai and Chinese neo-nationalism are in these contexts. Even though neo-nationalism was at the height of its popularity in Bangkok during my fieldwork period in 2000–2001, it was not an issue that excited interest amongst diasporic Chinese educators, businesspeople, politicians, and clan organizers. The neo-nationalist debate is largely restricted to elite groups in Bangkok who are looked upon with suspicion by provincial businesspeople and grassroots organizers alike. They fear that anti-urbanism and anti-capitalism could easily again target ethnic Chinese merchants.<sup>89</sup> This last section uses fieldwork in Thailand to demonstrate how economic culture is constructed in three very different contexts: the national center in Bangkok, a transnational node in Phuket, and the rural province of Mahasarakham. I chose these three sites because they should best exemplify nationalist, cosmopolitan and local economic cultures in Thailand. But the complex ethnographies of these three sites show how the diaspora calls into question neo-nationalism, globalism, and localism. Thus the identity politics are not simply between nationalism and cosmopolitanism, as most research on diaspora states, but between diaspora and context in national, transnational and local spaces.

### *Diasporic Chinese in Bangkok*

Comparing two global conventions of overseas Chinese in Bangkok shows the international/national nature of diasporic Chinese activity in the capital that pro-

88. See McKeown 1999, 322; and Liu 1998.

89. Viraphon Sopha, farmers' organizer in northeastern Thailand, in Chatniyom 2001, 26; Pasuk and Baker 2000, 172–74; Chang Noi, "Revisiting Dark Corners of Our Political Past," *The Nation* (Bangkok), 24 September 1997.

duces national boundaries in new ways. The Seventh World Huang Clan Association Convention, held in Bangkok in December 1999, functioned quite differently from the World Chinese Entrepreneurs Convention held in 1995 in Bangkok. Rather than gathering individual businesspeople into a transnational network, as the cosmopolitan diaspora narrative would suggest, the World Huang Clan Association conference gathered *national* Huang clan associations.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, the world body was created and promoted by the Taiwanese Huang Clan Association in 1980 as part of Taiwan's informal diplomacy of national reunification since it was ejected from the United Nations in 1971.<sup>91</sup>

Certainly, the World Huang Clan Association is one of the transnational bodies that exemplify the invisible empire of the overseas Chinese. The Huang clan even has its own anthem that sings of bringing together brothers from around the world. Glorious civilization is praised in familiar ways: "our country is the country of manners." But it is not clear whether they are referring to Chinese civilization or Huang civilization. While standard Chinese texts celebrate 5,000 years of glorious Chinese civilization, the Huang clan convention program states that "for more than 4,000 years our people have not forgotten their Huang roots." The unification of the various peoples from ancient times is not simply to unify the motherland in 1949, but to unify the transnational Huang clan in 1980.<sup>92</sup>

But the convention also shows the intensely national nature of the association: the Huang associations are not anti-national or postnational, but look to Thai national leaders and symbols as part of clan identity. While World Chinese Entrepreneurs conventions are "patronized by prominent Chinese transnational entrepreneurs, with the blessing of [non-Chinese] local [that is, national] political leaders," the World Huang Clan Association's program makes sure to celebrate the powerful Thai national politicians who are members of the Huang clan.<sup>93</sup> More to the point, the Thai organizers of the Huang convention made sure to appeal to national symbols: the first page of the program has an official photograph of the Thai king and queen. The genealogy of illustrious Huang ancestors only comes second. In a more prosaic sense, the mission of each Huang association is national: the Bangkok-based group is a charitable organization that takes care of Huang clanspeople in Thailand. Cosmopolitan activities are organized according to the borders of the host nation-state.

This nationalization of clan organizations is part of the firming up of Thai borders in the past decade. While there has been much talk about globalization breaking down the borders of the nation-state, since the 1980s the Thai state has been solidifying its physical and economic borders. Huge construction projects have

90. See *Diqijie shijie Huang shizong* 1999; and Liu 1998, 586.

91. See Callahan forthcoming (a), chap. 7.

92. See Huang Youhe in *Diqijie shijie Huang shizong* 1999, 16; Huang Song in *Diqijie* 1999, 13; and Huang Tongqing in *Diqijie* 1999, 18. Bolt and McKeown make similar points for other migrant associations, see Bolt 2000, 31; and McKeown 1999, 326.

93. See Liu 1998, 586; and *Diqijie shijie Huang shizong* 1999, 47–48.



spent scarce resources to build roads to clarify Thailand's borders with Burma and Malaysia, and embankments along the Mekong River to stabilize its riparian border with Laos.<sup>94</sup> Likewise, years before neo-nationalism emerged in 1997, the state has been rationalizing/nationalizing customs and immigration procedures to assert central Bangkok control over the political economy. Thailand is involved in a global network economy. But the main Thai node of this network is Bangkok, the capital of the nation-state.

The cosmopolitan Chinese associations in Bangkok work according to this international/national logic. Here they provide evidence for standard views of overseas Chinese politics: Sino-Thai organizations serve as bridges between China, Thailand, and other nation-states.<sup>95</sup> For example, in 1998 the fifty-five clan associations of Thailand sent letters both to the Indonesian embassy to protest the atrocities against ethnic Chinese, and to the Chinese embassy to demand action for Chinese compatriots.<sup>96</sup> This shows how the Chinese clan associations based in Bangkok work according to the diplomatic logic of the nation-state: even though they represent transnational groups, they still gathered together in 1998 according to Thai boundaries to petition the nation-states of Indonesia and the PRC. National clan associations thus serve as a gateway for international/national flows of people, information, capital, and charitable relief. They certainly take care of their own domestic Sino-Thai constituency, but they diverge radically from Thai neo-nationalism. They are an international/national form of nationalism rather than a nativist neo-nationalism. Academic analysis of overseas Chinese communities also characteristically follows this nation-state formula: research is conducted on overseas Chinese society "in" Thailand, "in" Malaysia, "in" Indonesia, "in" the United States, and so on.<sup>97</sup> But as I have shown, cosmopolitanism is produced in the tension between nation-states in Thailand and abroad.

### *Diasporic Chinese in Phuket*

Sino-Thai economic culture in Phuket is different from that in Bangkok. In Bangkok, anti-'Chineseness' is a non-issue because the Chinese have mixed with the Thai to such an extent that you cannot easily tell one from the other. In Phuket, neo-nationalism is not a problem because the Chinese dominate the province, constituting 70 percent of the population. Phuket is both the smallest and the richest province in Thailand. In this way, Phuket is a prosperous ethnic Chinese enclave more similar to Singapore and Penang than its fellow Thai provinces of Chiang Mai and Khon Kaen.

94. Author's interview with a Thai foreign ministry official, Bangkok, 15 December 2000.

95. See Wu 1999, 1-2; and Ong 1999, 133.

96. Author's interview with Ah Gok Liang, Manager of the Huang Association of Thailand, Bangkok, 16 December 2000.

97. Chan and Tong 2001.

It is not a coincidence that Phuket has a similar regional economic culture to Singapore and Penang. The three island-cities are linked in a historic network of Chinese migration facilitated by the European empires in Southeast Asia. While most of the Sino-Thai in central, northern, and northeastern Thailand came to the kingdom via Bangkok, most came to Phuket along the “southern route” to work in the island’s tin mines. This itinerary joined southern China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Penang, Phuket, and southern Burma together in a circuit of diasporic Chinese migration, trade, and culture.<sup>98</sup> The itinerary bypassed Bangkok not for political reasons, but because of economies of transport: until recently it took four days to travel overland to Bangkok, while it took just sixteen hours to sail to Penang.<sup>99</sup>

Rather than being produced in relation to the nation, diaspora was produced in relation to the British empire, as a community of Southeast Asian overseas Chinese, the Nanyang [South Seas] Chinese.<sup>100</sup> Diasporic Chinese activities were organized more around these British imperial nodes than according to Thai national borders. Though mainland Chinese national historiography employs overseas Chinese as an important source of anti-imperialist Chinese national identity, diasporic Chinese were also an integral part of Western imperialism. Another new word, “comprador,” was coined to describe the Chinese middlemen who facilitated imperial governance. Though Chinese people suffered from the opium and indentured labor regimes, Chinese merchants were also key figures in the network economy of the opium and labor trades.<sup>101</sup> When Thai nationalism made Chinese culture a problem in the 1940s and 1950s, it was common for ethnic Chinese from Phuket to follow the empire’s circuits to send their children to Penang for schooling. Likewise, books for Phuket’s Chinese school initially came from Penang and Hong Kong; only later did Taiwan compete with the PRC for influence via patriotic nationalist education.

Phuket’s tin mines, and then its tourist industry, have located the island in a transnational political economy since the mid-nineteenth century. Trade was conducted not just within the diasporic Chinese network facilitated by the British empire, but directly with North America, Europe, and Australia. Now, because of the consolidation of the Thai state, borders are firmer, and most trade goes through Bangkok. Still, the mayor of Phuket City wished to decentralize state power from Bangkok back to Phuket to encourage both a cosmopolitan economy and good governance. The point was not simply to join a Greater Chinese network—most of the Hokkien Chinese majority who dominate Phuket have little

98. *The Penguin Atlas of Diasporas* has a map that traces the southern route. Curiously, it does not list Phuket as a site on this itinerary. See Chaliand and Rageau 1997, 131.

99. Author’s interview with Lt. Phummisak Hongsyok, mayor of Phuket Municipality and vice president of the Hokkien Association, Phuket, 21 December 2000.

100. Wang 1992, 11–39.

101. See McKeown 1999, 316; Ngo 1999; and Trocki 1999.

interest in mainland China—but to encourage Phuket as a node in a more trans-national economy.<sup>102</sup>

One way to measure the strength of the Chinese community is to examine the success of Chinese schools. According to this method, the overseas Chinese have been quite successful in Phuket. The Thai-Chinese (*Thai-Hua*) school celebrated its ninetieth anniversary in 2000. The alumni of the school are proud to note that Thailand's first private Chinese school was founded in Phuket, not Bangkok. Chinese education has also survived better in Phuket than in other provinces, most probably because of Phuket's high concentration of diasporic Chinese and their political influence in the capital.<sup>103</sup> While alumni are proud that their school has survived, they are also humiliated at the school's suffering. The foundation of the school in 1910 puts it firmly in the trend of the growing nationalist consciousness among overseas Chinese.<sup>104</sup> Yet the timing was also unfortunate: the Chinese became a "problem" when the Thai monarchy was threatened by China's 1911 republican revolution. The Thai state thus had much the same view as the various Chinese regimes: overseas Chinese schools were seen as centers of political influence. The Thai state needed to control such activity, and hence Chinese schools were either closed down or closely regulated.

Like overseas Chinese history more generally, the school's ninety-year history is hardly stable: it has opened and closed again and again, changing its name several times. Initially it was called the Zhonghua (Chinese) School, and when it was reopened in 1948 it was called the Thai-Hua (Thai-Chinese) School. It was seen as a threat to Thai nationalism in the Phibul era (1938–44 and 1948–57), and as a communist threat during the Sarit-Thanom-Prapas era (1959–73). Alumni told how during the 1930s and 1950s, when students heard a state inspector coming, they had to burn their Chinese books. As with diasporic Chinese in general, the humiliation suffered in Phuket was not an epic humiliation of the Chinese nation, but day-to-day harassment. As control of Chinese education was only liberalized in 1992, memories of anti-Chinese policies are still fresh.<sup>105</sup> Even though respondents at the Thai-Hua School did not take the threat of neo-nationalism seriously, their history of humiliation and suffering made them wary. They wanted their remarks reported anonymously, which suggests that they still fear that Thai nationalism entails anti-Chinese activity.

Chinese schools are not just for educating children, but like the clan association examined in Bangkok, they are a center of community activity. Two other centers for community activity in Phuket are the Chinese temples and Rotary/Lions clubs. The Chinese temple in Phuket is especially noteworthy, as it is at the center of the world-renowned Vegetarian Festival. It draws many tourists from the West, but

102. Author's interview with a small businessman, Phuket, 28 December 2000; Author's interview with Lt. Phummisak Hongsyok, Phuket, 21 December 2000.

103. Author's interview with Thai-Hua School alumni, Phuket, 21 December 2000.

104. Wang 1992, 40.

105. See *Thirakruet phiti* 1999, 93; and Kasian 1997, 95.

the Festival is also part of a pilgrimage circuit for ethnic Chinese believers. Hence diasporic Chinese relations are reversed. Here, the Sino-Thai are not sojourners who long to return to China. Connections between Phuket's Kathu temple and temples on mainland China are very weak. The main relationship is with a Chinese temple in Malaysia that was founded in 1850 as an offshoot of the Kathu temple. This was only rediscovered in 1993, when the president of the Taiping temple in Malaysia traced its origins back to Phuket. Hence rather than homecoming being directed at hometowns in China, as standard overseas Chinese narratives state, here the center is in Phuket.<sup>106</sup> Sino-Thai in Phuket are not pseudo-Chinese in need of reeducation in 'Chineseness' by the PRC, but a source of Chinese culture that is produced in relation to nodes of transnational activity in Southeast Asia.

Similar regional communities have been formed via petit bourgeois social clubs. Though the Rotary and Lions clubs are both midwestern in origin, they have a very loyal following in Southeast Asia that is largely, if not exclusively, overseas Chinese. As with schools and temples, most of the networking is not with China or Taiwan, but among neighboring Southeast Asian nations.<sup>107</sup> Their solidarity is with compatriots in Malaysia and Indonesia. Even so, it is not like Thai neo-nationalism that looks to Mahathir as an anti-Western ally. It was clear from interviews that the solidarity is with fellow ethnic Chinese who gather against a perceived Islamic threat exemplified by Malaysian and Indonesian society.

The Phuket experience shows how overseas Chinese still engage in transnational networks, often in conflict with the central government in Bangkok and neo-nationalist ideology. These transnational networks have grown out of a Nanyang Chinese economic culture fostered by the British empire, which persists in post-colonial Southeast Asia. But as the major civic institutions of Phuket—the Chinese school, the temple, and the petit bourgeois social clubs—show, these networks are not closely linked with China. Rather, they are involved in transnational microcircuits of education, pilgrimage, and conventioning within Southeast Asia, especially with Chinese communities just over the border in Malaysia. As they cross national borders, they produce new communities not just in distinction to states, but as part of a relation of Chinese and Islamic economic cultures. Thus cosmopolitan Chinese groups in Phuket are not evidence of a "third culture" that is independent of nationalism. The diaspora takes on meaning in regional networks of economic culture rather than in either homogeneous national communities or a coherent cosmopolitan culture.

106. *Nangsue thi raruk sanchao* 1996, 12; Author's interview with Chaiyooth Pinpradab, vice president of the Kathu Temple, Phuket, 19 December 2000. In Thai, "*sanjao*-Chinese temple" means a Daoist rather than a Buddhist temple.

107. Author's interview with Officers of the Hokkien Association of Phuket, Phuket, 25 December 2000; author's interview with Chaiyooth Pinpradab, Kathu, Phuket, 19 December 2000.

*Diasporic Chinese in Mahasarakham*

The Sino-Thai situation in the rural northeastern province of Mahasarakham is in many ways the opposite of that in Phuket. It is involved in neither a national nor a transnational economic culture, but as I show, it takes shape in relation to outsiders from other provinces. The community is small. It is one of the poorest provinces in the country. Though Chinese have been in the area for nearly two centuries—first settling in the neighboring province of Roi-Et in 1836—not much is going on in Mahasarakham. The Chinese school lasted only from 1944 to 1949, when it was shut down by the state. Clan associations are absent; interested Sino-Thai have to go to the closest city, Khon Kaen—likewise for the Rotary and Lions clubs.<sup>108</sup>

The main “Chinese” institution in the province is called the Mahasarakham Association, and it was founded relatively recently, in 1982. Unlike the Thai-Hua school in Phuket, this Association has not had to struggle for recognition from the state. Quite the opposite: it was the state that instructed the local Sino-Thai community to found the association to celebrate the ruling Chakri dynasty’s bicentennial. Diasporic organizations thus were formed at the provincial level to legitimate royal nationalism. Strangely, the Chinese committee of Mahasarakham decided to name the association and its building after its Thai province rather than anything Chinese or royalist.

Unlike Phuket, Mahasarakham is not part of any transnational network—except if one counts the communist insurgency that raged in the region up into the 1980s, and was led by Sino-Thai. It would be hard to argue that Mahasarakham is even part of a national network, because the railroad and superhighway both bypass the province. The most cosmopolitan aspect of the province is the University of Mahasarakham, which forms a strong cultural center for the community. (Phuket, with all its wealth and influence, still lacks a university.) Business in Mahasarakham, on the other hand, is local. It is almost exclusively trade and commerce: there is no industry in the province. The most prominent Sino-Thai owns the Toyota dealership. A past president of the Mahasarakham Association is a shopkeeper who sells picture frames. Sino-Thai business is generally represented by the Chamber of Commerce, which has the same membership as the Mahasarakham Association; that is, it is ethnic Chinese. The diaspora’s limited “economic horizon” in Mahasarakham, that focuses on trade rather than manufacturing, is common among provincial business in Thailand’s remote northeastern region.<sup>109</sup>

Sino-Thai life, as with life in general in Mahasarakham, is best described as “provincial” in both the geographical and the critical sense. The mission statement of the Mahasarakham Association underlines this:

108. Niranam 1993, 9; author’s interview with Nareerat Parisuthiwuttiporn, history lecturer at the University of Mahasarakham, Mahasarakham, 8 August 2001; author’s interview with Thasaanachan Phumiphan, Mahasarakham, 9 August 2001.

109. See Nareerat 2000, 6; and Ueda 2000, 181.

The objectives of the association are: to be a meeting place for the Mahasarakham people, to create unity among the Mahasarakham people, to support secure jobs for Mahasarakham people, to be the intermediary between government officials and the people, and to promote education, sports, religion, and traditional customs.<sup>110</sup>

Such provincial capitalism, which was dominated by Sino-Thai business, was one of the keys to the successful Thai political economy before 1997. But a recent controversy testifies to the parochial nature of the economic culture in Mahasarakham as it is constructed in relation to outsiders. In 2001, the Chamber of Commerce was agitated because its members were being undersold by extra-provincial caravan traders. Competition from these outsiders was driving the Mahasarakham traders out of business; the outsiders' prices were lower because they did not have to pay local taxes.

Rather than promoting a transnational network and a liberal trade regime as in Phuket, Sino-Thai business in Mahasarakham organized demonstrations to protest against a national free market.<sup>111</sup> Globalization was not the problem here, so much as any national economy—Sino-Thai business demanded that the provincial governor restrict interprovincial trade and enforce a Mahasarakham mercantilism. The irony is that overseas Chinese used the caravan trade in the nineteenth century to penetrate markets in northeastern Thailand. Such an anti-entrepreneurial attitude among the diasporic Chinese is one reason why Mahasarakham is not as prosperous as its neighbors. Sino-Thai in Mahasarakham are wary of investing money, and prefer to deposit it in banks—none of which are based in the province.<sup>112</sup>

Sino-Thai in Mahasarakham thus show how diasporic Chinese adapt to and develop local economic culture. In this way, they are the only diasporic Chinese interviewed by the author in Thailand who correspond with Bangkok's neo-nationalist mercantilism thematically, if not in terms of content. They see outsiders as immoral competition and wish to construct and guard economic borders. They complain that the system is unfair and see the problem as more political than economic. The government—in this case, the governor and mayor—is either too weak to defend their interests, or has shown its corrupt nature by selling out the province to outsiders. The province is an economic backwater—even when compared with its neighbor Roi-Et, let alone Bangkok or Phuket—and successful overseas Chinese traders reflect this very narrow view of business. Rather than being evidence of an invisible empire of diasporic Chinese entrepreneurs who constitute the third largest economy in the world, or of a neo-national economic culture, this group of businesspeople is simply trying to keep the caravan traders out. Once again, the diaspora is necessary for producing economic and cultural bor-

110. Niranam 1993, 12, 10.

111. Author's interview with Thasaanachan Phumiphan, Mahasarakham, 9 August 2001.

112. Author's interview with Thavesilp Subwattana, History Professor at the University of Mahasarakham, Mahasarakham, 10 August 2001.

ders in Mahasarakham. Its community takes shape against the mobile and flexible capitalism of the extra-provincial caravan traders.

The fieldwork recounted in this section certainly demonstrates the diversity of Sino-Thai experience—sometimes national, other times transnational, and still others provincial—and how it is formed in distinction to a set of Others: for example, anti-Indonesian in Bangkok, anti-Muslim in Phuket, and anti-caravan trader in Mahasarakham. But one can generalize from this analysis. In all three sites, Sino-Thai are not at the periphery of either Thai or Chinese economic culture. They are not the sojourners of old who defined themselves in terms of China's standards of civilization, or immigrants who have assimilated to Thai nationalism. Rather, these groups are busy networking for three particular forms of capitalism: international, transnational, and provincial. The key to understanding their activity is that they are all networking in similar ways: constructing diasporic identities against difference encountered in their specific contexts. Hence, diasporic identity in Thailand functions in similar ways to national identity: it is not a culture of shared norms, so much as a set of common differences defined by particular economic-cultural contexts.

The fieldwork helps one to question cosmopolitanism: none of these three diasporas is evidence of an autonomous "third culture" of Sino-Thai identity that "seeks opportunities elsewhere." Rather than being flexible and mobile, as Nonini and Ong argue, these three ethnographies show how the diaspora is flexible but not necessarily mobile. Thus research that points to the fluid cosmopolitanism of diaspora only applies to the limited case of wealthy "transnational yuppies." Rather than being a transformative force for a new style of globalization, evidence shows that diasporic Chinese adapt to particular economic contexts. Rather than seeking opportunities elsewhere, they creatively respond to and develop opportunities in context. They are very successful at colonizing and shaping particular economic cultures: international/national capitalism in Bangkok, transnational capitalism in Phuket, and provincial capitalism in Mahasarakham. They are not nationalist in Phuket or Mahasarakham simply because most of the international/national economic opportunities are concentrated in the Bangkok area; they are less cosmopolitan in Bangkok than expected for the same reason: it is the national economic node. Diasporas thus are not the pure agency of mobile capital, but flexibly respond to specific economic-cultural contexts—in predictable ways, related to relations of difference.

Though Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink lament that there are "few full-fledged transnational movements," I think that the diasporic communities examined in this article are worthy of their consideration.<sup>113</sup> But rather than just looking to global civil society to see how transnational nongovernmental organizations construct

113. Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002, 8. As charitable organizations and educational foundations, many of the institutions of the diasporic public sphere would fit into standard definitions of NGO activity (see 6–7).



shared international norms, one also has to examine the specific localities of the diasporic public sphere's clan associations, temples, schools, and petit bourgeois social clubs. Rather than referring to the universals of human rights and democracy to guide and legitimate political activity, the transnational politics of diaspora take shape in contextual relations between identity and difference as they produce social, economic, and cultural borders. Just as with the mutual construction of diasporic and national identity in China and Thailand, the main point is not the cultural content of the identity, but the relations of exclusion that produce it. Hence to understand diasporic politics in Thailand, one needs to do more than chart out the specifics of each particular experience in Bangkok, Phuket, and Mahasarakham. Rather than each being a prime example of nationalist, cosmopolitan, and local identity—as expected—the ethnographies show how economic and social activity is produced in a common logic of difference. Though the content of each economic culture is different in the three sites, the form of identity formation via exclusion is the same. The evidence shows how identity is produced through constructing borders of self and Other, not just for the most obvious case of national identity, but in relations of exclusion in local and transnational contexts as well.

## Conclusion

Globalization does not simply describe a process whereby Western capitalism and American popular culture dominate the world, and erode both state sovereignty and local culture. This article has shown how Chinese capitalism and culture have been key in building borders and producing communities. But rather than substituting “Chinese” for “American” to describe this process, I have used diaspora to question popular understandings of the global versus the local to argue that cosmopolitanism and nationalism produce each other in relations of norms and difference. Hence, diasporas not only loosen any essential link between nation and state but also illuminate the informal politics of the relation between the global and the local.

Though diasporic Chinese capitalism is often figured as a peculiarly Asian form of globalization that erodes national borders in Southeast Asia, I have shown how diasporic populations are intimately involved in defining borders. The evidence has shown how neo-nationalism in China and Thailand shares a similar logic: a highly territorialized identity, an economic-cultural understanding of neo-imperialism, and an Othering of the West. Both have a strong notion of National Humiliation that relies on a foreign/domestic dynamic: foreign invasion aided by domestic stupidity and corruption. Both have used diasporic Chinese as a resource to construct a nationalist self and a foreign Other. Though Thai nationalism has been constructed against a Chinese Other in the past, now neo-nationalism not only includes Sino-Thai but is largely formulated by them. Yet fieldwork shows

how many Sino-Thai in the provinces still figure Thai nationalism as an anti-Chinese activity and are suspicious about its morality and practicality.

The analysis also questioned how nationalism and cosmopolitanism are formulated by arguing against the popular notion of diasporic Chinese as a cosmopolitan community. The ethnographies both added to and problematized critical considerations of diaspora by examining the diversity of 'Chineseness' as it is articulated in different economic-cultural spaces in Thailand. Fieldwork in Bangkok, Phuket, and Mahasarakham demonstrated that ethnic Chinese populations do not simply constitute a third culture. Though internally coherent to people in Bangkok, Phuket, and Mahasarakham, each ethnography called the others into question, adding to our critical view of national identity. Diaspora thus both constructs and deconstructs the dynamic of nationalism and cosmopolitanism. Rather than assimilating to Thai nationalism, diasporic Chinese are involved in colonizing the prevailing economic culture, be it national, transnational, or provincial. It is noteworthy that on the one hand, many of the Bangkok elite who write neo-nationalist manifestos are Sino-Thai, and on the other hand, a provincial diasporic Chinese institution is called the "Mahasarakham" Association. Examining the transnational politics of diaspora is thus helpful, as this group is often seen as "social problem" by states because it does not fit into normative notions of territory and identity. A sociological approach, for example, which examines national identity in terms of shared norms and institutions, would have missed this economic-cultural dynamic.

The analysis thus has theoretical import beyond the "exotic East." As stated above, one obvious conclusion to draw would be that the diversity of diasporic economic cultures evades generalization as an example of either empiricism or relativism. Neither is the argument of this article. Quite the opposite: generalizations are possible, but one has to look in different places. To understand how nationalism and cosmopolitanism, the global and the local work, one needs to see how the outsiders, such as the diaspora, are necessary for constructing communities and producing boundaries. Diasporas, thus are not just an economic resource, but a symbolic resource in the economic cultures of cosmopolitanism, nationalism, and localism. To argue this, I have built on sociological constructivism's examination of identity and norms. Certainly, there are considerable overlaps between sociological and anthropological constructivism; but the distinction is also important. By focusing research on the search for cultural norms, sociological constructivism is unable to get beyond the assimilation/multiculturalism debate that limits diaspora studies. A sociological approach, for example, might look for common Asian norms to explain the similarities between Chinese and Thai neo-nationalism. But rather than looking to culture as a substance that has content, I have shown how anthropological constructivism highlights how culture takes shape in context-sensitive relations between identity and difference. The article has shown that what China and Thailand share is not a common identity, but a common set of differences—in this case, diasporic Chinese and Western imperialism—against which their particular national identities are constructed.

By shifting the research agenda from norms to difference, we are better able to consolidate sociological constructivism's anti-essentialist view of identity and understand the complexities of transnational politics. A future research agenda would trace how this logic of identity and exclusion applies beyond the cases of China and Thailand to the relations of difference between other nations and other diasporas. As mentioned in the introduction, the Islamic diaspora in Europe is intimately involved in producing recent neo-nationalisms in France, England, Germany, and the Netherlands. Jewish, Irish, and South Asian diasporas are likewise important elements in various nationalisms around the world. In this way, diaspora research is part of the movement in IR from a tight focus on "inter-national," to an attention to "relations"—the relational nature of identity.

To address these issues, IR theory needs to better explore the questions of economic culture thus far raised mostly by historians and anthropologists. IR scholars could add expertise in norms, states, and regimes to this crossover discipline that combines cultural analysis and IPE to examine the politics of transnational flows of people, cultural practices, and capital. IR theory would also have to take more seriously the politics of Otherness. It is not a coincidence that the most compelling transnational social movements, especially since Seattle 1999, do not describe themselves normatively according to what they are for, but counter-normatively according to what they oppose: anti-globalization, anti-capitalism, anti-American in Europe, and anti-West in the rest of the world. The modalities of these transnational social movements also appeal to Otherness and counter-normative opposition: *nongovernmental* organization and *nonviolent* action.<sup>114</sup> To understand such transnational politics, it is necessary to more closely examine the politics of difference to see how it shapes these important *nonstate* movements.

This article has used the peculiar example of the Chinese diaspora to start an examination of these larger political issues. As the empirical evidence demonstrated, diaspora are not simply an "ethnic problem." They are key in the construction and deconstruction of the seemingly opposite ideologies of nationalism and cosmopolitanism. Diaspora thus not only adds new data to arguments about global/local relations. It helps one question the structures of world politics that look to the opposition between cosmopolitanism and nationalism.

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114. For an analysis of counter-normative politics in domestic space, see Callahan 1998, especially 85–143.

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