

## **Nation, *Buzu* and the Formation of the Huaxia Nation\***

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民族可以划分为“古代民族”与“近代民族”两种类型，古代华夏民族在形成过程中经历了从“自在民族”到“自觉民族”两个发展阶段。夏、商、西周时期的华夏民族属于“自在民族”，春秋战国时期的华夏民族属于“自觉民族”。作为“自在民族”的华夏族之所以能够在夏商时期出现，是因为夏商王朝具有多元一体的复合制国家结构，王朝国家框架内能够容纳众多部族。夏代之前的五帝时代，则属于华夏民族的滥觞期，这一时期经过族邦联盟，众多的部族国家最后走向多元一体的民族国家。

关键词：华夏民族 族邦联盟 复合制国家结构

The nation can be broken down into two categories: “ancient nations” and “modern nations.” The ancient Huaxia nation went through two phases in the course of its formation: the self-existent nation and the self-aware nation. The reason the self-existent Huaxia nation<sup>1</sup> arose in the Xia and Shang period lies in its unified yet diverse composite state structure that could encompass a variety of *buzu* within the framework of a dynastic state. The pre-Xia Five Emperors period saw the genesis of the Huaxia nation. During this period, different *buzu* states were cemented into a diverse yet unified nation-state through a confederation of chiefdoms.

**Keywords:** Huaxia nation, confederation of chiefdoms, composite state structure

The origin and evolution of the state is often associated with the formation of ancient nations or peoples. Such an association was already identified in the classic works of Morgan and Engels over a century ago. From the mid-1950s on, Chinese scholars began to adopt Stalin’s definition of the nation to investigate the origin of the Han Chinese and the formation of

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1 In this article, 华夏民族 (Huaxia nation) refers specifically to the predecessor of the Han Chinese before the Qin-Han period with other Chinese ethnic groups such as Qiang (羌), Rong (戎) and Di (狄) not included, as distinguished from the term 中华民族 (Chinese nation).

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the Huaxia nation (华夏民族). However, as Stalin's definition focused on modern nations, a series of issues remained unsettled: (1) What is the definition of nation, particularly of ancient nations? (2) What is the distinction between ancient and modern nations? (3) Given the realities of Chinese history, what is the relationship between the formation of ancient nations and their emergence? (4) What ancient state form or structure is related to the formation of the Huaxia nation, the predecessor of the Han Chinese? (5) What is the upper time limit for the formation of the Huaxia nation? Clearly, addressing these issues involves a combination of theoretical concepts and the realities of Chinese history. Here, we propose a new view or perspective by breaking "nation" into two categories: "ancient nations" and "modern nations," and by defining their attributes separately. In the category of ancient nations, we will term those ethnic communities (族共同体 *zu gongtongti*) that are higher than tribes (部落 *buluo*) but are bound by kinship or blood ties, *buzu* (部族), meaning "tribal ethnic groups." We will trace the development of ancient state forms or structures from "unitary chiefdoms" to "unified but diverse composite dynasties," to reveal the transformation of *buzu* to nation and the formation of the early Huaxia nation.

### I. Nation, *Buzu* and Their Relationship

Stalin defined the nation as "a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture." This famous assertion was made with particular reference to modern nations; he noted that "A nation is not merely a historical category but a historical category belonging to a definite epoch, the epoch of rising capitalism."<sup>2</sup> And he said, "There were no nations in the pre-capitalist period, nor could there be."<sup>3</sup> In Stalin's view, no nation ever arose or existed before the advent of capitalism.

Stalin's definition sparked numerous discussions among Chinese scholars about how it accorded with the realities of ancient Chinese history.<sup>4</sup> Among others, Fan Wenlan wrote an essay in the 1950s,<sup>5</sup> arguing that as early as the Qin-Han period, the Han Chinese already possessed the four characteristics of nation formation. He concluded: "Since the Qin-Han period, the Han Chinese have emerged as a unique nation from unique social conditions. This is neither the *buzu* of a divided state nor is it the bourgeois nation of the capitalist era." Using the four characteristics

2 I.V. Stalin, "Marxism and the National Question," pp. 294, 300.

3 I.V. Stalin, "The National Question and Leninism: Reply to Comrades Meshkov, Kovalchuk, and Others," p. 289.

4 See Li Zhenhong, "Researching the Definition of the Nation: 60 Years since the Founding of New China"; Xu Jieshun, "Revisiting Ethnic Communities and the Nation"; Ben Ji, "Latest Developments in the Discussion of Nation Formation."

5 See Fan Wenlan, "The Causes of China's Becoming a Unified Nation since the Qin and Han Dynasties." The article was later included in *A Collection of Papers on the Formation of the Han Chinese*, compiled by the Editorial Department of *Historical Research*.

defined by Stalin, Fan tried to break through Stalin's limiting of nation formation to the rise of capitalism by proposing "a unique nation emerging from unique social conditions." At the time, Fan's opponents attacked him mainly for deviating from Stalin's idea that nation formation took place during the rise of capitalism, stressing that "common economic life" referred to a "national market" and that "economic centers" were peculiar to the capitalist era.<sup>6</sup>

In 1963-1965, a succession of essays on the formation and definition of the nation was published in *Academic Research*. An important advance in understanding was the view some scholars held that nations could emerge in late primitive society and early class society, and could exist in either slave society or feudal society, depending on circumstances.<sup>7</sup> Others suggested that the communities of people appearing before the rise of capitalism should be termed "ancient nations," as distinct from the modern sense of bourgeois nations.<sup>8</sup> In the 1980s-1990s, when reform and opening up were under way, China saw new progress in discussions over the concept and meaning of nation. For one thing, scholars completely broke through the time limit proclaimed by Stalin under which nations only appeared after the rise of capitalism, with the result that explicit terms like "primitive nations," "ancient nations" and "modern nations" were not uncommon in some of their writings. Other concepts such as "nomadic nations" and "agrarian nations" were also used during the period. For another, in applying Stalin's definition to the realities of ancient Chinese history, some scholars moved the discussion from the formation of the Han Chinese to that of its predecessor—the Huaxia nation. Some believed that the Huaxia nation emerged during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period, while others maintained that it emerged in the Western Zhou Dynasty, and still others located it in the Xia Dynasty.<sup>9</sup>

With the advent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, *World Ethno-National Studies* carried a succession of three articles by Hao Shiyuan, all under the title of "Revisiting Stalin's Definition of the Nation."<sup>10</sup> In his articles, Hao aptly noted that "'Nation' as defined by Stalin refers to the 'nation' during the nation-state period," and that "We must understand Stalin's definition as

6 See Zeng Wenjing, "On the Formation of the Han Chinese"; Zhang Zhengming, "A Tentative View of the Formation of the Han Chinese"; Guan Xian, "A Few Comments on the 'Unique Nation' Theory"; Yang Zejun, "Some Personal Views on the Formation of the Han Chinese: Discussions with Comrade Fan Wenlan and Comrade G. V. Efimov"; Wei Mingjing, "On the Definition and Nature of the Nation." All of these were included in the *A Collection of Papers on the Formation of the Han Chinese*, ed. Editorial Department of *Historical Research*.

7 Fang Dezhaoh, "Personal Views on the Nation and Nation Formation."

8 Cen Jiawu and Cai Zhongshu, "Some Personal Views on Nation Formation."

9 See Li Zhenhong, "Researching the Definition of the Nation: 60 Years since the Founding of New China"; Xie Weiyang, "On the Formation of the Huaxia Nation"; Tian Jizhou, "Nations in the Xia Dynasty and their Relationships"; You Zhong, "The Establishment of the Xia Dynasty, the Formation of the Huaxia Nation and Its Relations with Neighboring Ethnic Groups"; Shen Changyun, "On the Origin and Formation of the Huaxia Nation"; Chen Liankai, "On the Formation of the Huaxia Nation."

10 Hao Shiyuan, "Revisiting Stalin's Definition of Нация: Part One, Stalin's Definition of Nation and Its Theoretical Sources," "Revisiting Stalin's Definition of Нация: Part Two, The Construction of the Soviet Nation-State System and Stalin's Re-elucidation of the Definition of Нация" and "Revisiting Stalin's Definition of Нация: Part Three, State and Nation in the Soviet Multi-ethnic Model."

being limited to nations (Нация) falling into the category of nation states.”<sup>11</sup> This clarifies our understanding of Stalin’s definition and explores the question of the universality of the four characteristics set forth by Stalin for the nation-state period. How should we define the concept of “ancient nation” prior to the nation-state period? This question merits fresh attention.

The classic writers, over a century ago, believed that ancient nations began to appear on the eve of ancient states, between the upper stage of barbarism and the lower stage of state society. That is to say, the wide time span from the transition from clan society to state society through to the early stage of state society witnessed the formation of ancient nations. In *The German Ideology*, for instance, Frederick Engels stated, “The antagonism between town and country begins with the transition from barbarism to civilization, from tribe to state, from locality to nation, and runs through the whole history of civilization to the present day.”<sup>12</sup> Referring to the transition from prehistory to the state in his *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, he said: “The confederacy of related tribes becomes everywhere a necessity, and soon also their fusion, involving the fusion of the separate tribal territories into one territory of the nation.”<sup>13</sup> Marx and Morgan held similar views.<sup>14</sup>

Such perceptions of ancient nations can be taken to be the theoretical source of expressions such as “primitive nations,” “ancient nations,” “nomadic nations” and “agrarian nations” used by Chinese scholars. Here we argue that viewed broadly, what we call “primitive nations” can be subsumed under the category of ancient nations,<sup>15</sup> and that a general distinction can be made between “ancient nations” and “modern nations” (mainly those that appeared in the nation-state era). Whereas “ancient nations” refers to nations having natural attributes in the traditional sense, “modern nations” are associated with capitalist national markets and trade that came into being in the early modern period, or “nation-states” in the modern sense.”<sup>16</sup> Since “ancient nations” and “modern nations” arose under different historical circumstances, there are both similarities and differences between them.

How should we define “ancient nations”? What are their basic characteristics? We argue here that Stalin’s definition of nations “in the nation-state era,” though focusing on modern nations, actually covers the most fundamental aspects of the natural attributes of modern and ancient nations: language, territory, economic life, and culture. Thus, we may solve the

11 Hao Shiyuan, “Revisiting Stalin’s Definition of Нация: Part One, Stalin’s Definition of Nation and Its Theoretical Sources.”

12 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works of Marx and Engels*, vol. 1, p. 104.

13 *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 164-165.

14 Yi Jianping, *Tribal Confederation and Chiefdoms: Democracy · Autocracy · State*, pp. 35-51.

15 Of course, the concept of “primitive nation” is appropriate and a better choice when we are laying the emphasis on the nation in primitive society.

16 Others argue that the frequent use of “nation-states” by modern European and American scholars refers to modern nations possessing the political attribute of “sovereignty belonging to all citizens.” See Qin Haibo, “The Definition and Formation of Nation-state in the Light of Spanish History.”

problem by slightly modifying that part of the definition that has modern content. For instance, the “common economic life” proposed by Stalin as being connected to the capitalist economy can be changed to the “same economic life” in the case of ancient nations. Based on Stalin’s definition of the modern nation (the nation in the nation-state era), we here define an “ancient nation” as an anciently evolved stable community of people that is higher and broader than a tribe and is formed on the basis of a common language, common territory, common culture and the same economic life. In this definition, we replace “common economic life” by “same economic life” because ancient societies had not evolved economic links to an extent comparable to those of capitalism. Thus, to accord with the stage of economic development of ancient societies and the realities of ancient history, we prefer “same economic life” as a description of this feature of ancient nations.

Chinese scholars use both *minzu* (民族 a nation or a people) and *buzu* (部族 a tribal ethnic group) to describe an ethnic community above the level of the tribe. Whereas some propose *buzu* as a generic term for all communities under feudalism and the slave system, others hold that it refers to clans and tribes. In both cases, obviously, *buzu* is used in relation to *minzu*, with the difference between them being one of level or type of community. Still others explain the distinction between the two in terms of one being a “kinship nation” (血缘民族) and the other a “culture nation” (文化民族).<sup>17</sup> Identifying *buzu* as a kinship nation serves to highlight its kinship attributes. Since all ethnic communities during the Xia, Shang and Zhou periods of Chinese history built their historical memories upon the myths of the birth of their earliest ancestors and the formation of their lineage groups or surname groups, kinship became a distinctive attribute of such ethnic communities. Thus, we have two terms for these communities: *buzu* (tribal ethnic group) and *xueyuan minzu* (kinship nation). Both terms have their advantages and disadvantages. In terms of grammar, a kinship nation is likewise a nation, and “kinship” here is simply an attribute of “nation.” Proponents of the term “kinship nation” base their argument broadly on the idea that those nations with a kinship element can be termed “kinship nations” or *buzu*, while nations that transcend kinship attributes and are linked by culture can be termed “culture nations” or ancient nations in the general sense. However, the division into “kinship nations” and “culture nations” tends to confuse the concept and definition of the nation. Here, to underscore its kinship attributes, we prefer to use the concept of *buzu*, because we do not see the distinction between *buzu* (tribal ethnic group) and *minzu* (nation) as being simply one of category, but rather as pertaining to the level and nature of an ethnic community. Therefore, we can define *buzu* as a historically constituted ethnic community that is broader and at a higher level than a tribe and that shares kinship attributes (such as lineage), and a common language, culture and territory (with different elements initially living in geographical contiguity, although particular ones may subsequently have migrated elsewhere). *Buzu* existed both in late primitive society and in

17 Wang He, “Further Research on the Laws of History: With Reference to the Development of Historical Materialism.”

ancient state society. Whereas *buzu* in the former case comprised different tribes or kinship-based chiefdoms or tribal groups, *buzu* in the latter case could establish *buzu* states, which, being states in themselves, are in a similar position to the “early states.”

Based on the above arguments, we can summarize the connections and distinctions between *buzu* and ancient nations as follows: the *buzu* is an ethnic community at a higher level than a tribe, while an ancient nation is higher than a *buzu*. The state of an ancient nation may comprise a number of different *buzu*. Such a state is usually composite in structure, with existence of different *buzu* within it being clearly marked. Whereas the *buzu* is kinship bound, the ancient nation transcends such ties and becomes linked by “the concept of a great culture,” which serves as the nexus of both the ancient and the modern nation.

## II. Names for and Self-Awareness of the Huaxia Nation

The earliest appellation for the Chinese nation is *huaxia minzu* (华夏民族). *Huaxia* (华夏), *zhuxia* (诸夏), etc. were the most widely used terms during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period. For instance, the *Zuo Zhuan* (左传 *The Commentary of Zuo*) records Ju Zhi, prince of the Jiang Rong, as saying: “We the Rong people differ from the *Hua* in cuisine, clothing, language and currency.” Ju Zhi referred to the Huaxia nation settling in the Central Plain as *hua* (华) and his own people as *rong* (戎), indicating that *hua* (华) and *huaxia* were used for both self-referring and other-referring purposes. Likewise, the terms *rong* (戎) and *zhurong* (诸戎) were used for the Rong people both by themselves and by others. Terms for the Huaxia nation during the Spring and Autumn period included *hua* (华), *xia* (夏), *huaxia* (华夏), *zhuxia*, and so on. In the *Zuo Zhuan*, 26<sup>th</sup> year of Duke Xiang, for instance, *chu* (楚) was used in opposition to *huaxia*. Elsewhere, 1<sup>st</sup> year of Duke Min, it records Guan Zhong saying to Duke Huan of Qi, “The *Di* and *Rong* (狄戎) people are as insatiable as wolves, while the *Zhuxia* people are kin to each other and thus cannot be forsaken.” In the *Gongyang Zhuan* (*The Commentary of Gongyang*, 15<sup>th</sup> year of Duke Cheng), the Huaxia nation was called *zhuxia* (诸夏). And the *Zuo Zhuan* (21<sup>st</sup> year of Duke Xi) used *xia* and *zhuxia* in opposition to the *Man* and *Yi* (蛮夷 barbarians). Further evidence comes from a dialogue between Duke Dao of Jin and his minister Wei Jiang recorded in the *Zuo Zhuan* under the 4<sup>th</sup> Year of Duke Xiang, in which the Huaxia nation was referred to as *zhuhua* (诸华) and *hua*. In a word, *huaxia*, *zhuxia*, *zhuhua*, *hua* and *xia* were all appellations for the Huaxia nation and all had the same meaning.

Due to the currency of these terms in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period, many scholars believe that it was then that the Huaxia nation came into being.<sup>18</sup> Here, however, we argue that the terms *huaxia*, *zhuxia*, *zhuhua*, *hua* and *xia* were used to highlight the homogeneity of the Huaxia people and to distinguish it from other peoples. Their wide use not only reveals that the Huaxia nation had already come into being by that time, but also, more importantly, displays the nation’s consciousness of itself. Due to the frequent wars

18 Shen Changyun, “On the Origin and Formation of the Huaxia Nation.”

in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period, alien peoples began to appear in the settlement of the Huaxia people, giving rise to an awareness of the “distinction between the Huaxia people and the Yi barbarians.” In other words, the Huaxia nation’s consciousness of self arose from the strong need to distinguish itself from other peoples and an associated sense of crisis. The word “distinction” involved identifying the difference between Chinese culture and the *Man, Yi, Rong, Di* and other barbarian cultures. Terms such as *huaxia* highlighted the difference between the Huaxia nation, natives of the Central Plain, and other peoples in terms of clothing, rituals, codes and statutes, demonstrating the nation’s concern for its survival, development, honor and security.

We can see from this marked national awareness that the Huaxia people of that period were already a self-conscious nation with a high degree of internal cultural homogeneity. If we view the formation and development of the nation in terms of the two phases of the “self-existent nation” and the “self-conscious nation,” then the Huaxia nation in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period was “self-conscious,” i.e. it was a nation that had a strong consciousness of itself as a nation. Prior to the “self-conscious” phase was the “self-existent” phase, and it is the latter that should be viewed as the beginning of its nation formation.

A “self-conscious nation” is a “cultural nation” that has a keen consciousness of itself as a nation. This can be seen from the meaning of *huaxia* and *zhuxia*. The *Shuowen Jiezi* (说文解字 Explaining and Analyzing Characters) says: “The Xia, the people of *Zhongguo* (中国 the Central Kingdom or Central State/s).” *Xia* also means “grandeur.” In the “*Shigu*” Chapter (释诂 Explaining the Old) of the *Erya* (尔雅), we find: “By *Xia*, we mean grand.” The term *xia* also entails *ya* (雅 elegance), as can be seen from the “*Da Ya*” (大雅 Greater Elegance) and “*Xiao Ya*” (小雅 Lesser Elegance) chapters of the *Book of Songs* (诗经 *Shi Jing*) in which *ya* is used as an synonym for *xia*, and *yayan* (雅言 elegant words) is equivalent to *xiayan* (夏言 the words of *xia*). The term *hua* is mainly used in the sense of “colorful pattern” (采章) or “magnificence” (华美) in old-script literature. In other words, the reason why Huaxia as a people are referred to as *hua*, *xia*, *huaxia*, *zhuxia* and *zhuhua* can be ascribed both to the location of the Xia Dynasty in the Central Plain (the earliest *Zhongguo* or China) and to the Huaxia people’s pride in the high development of their culture and civilization. Of course, such pride in their national and cultural distinctiveness betokens national maturity and self-awareness. It is precisely because of its association with this highly developed civilization that the term *huaxia*, once adopted as an appellation for the earliest part of Chinese nation, has been used till the present day.

### III. The Composite State Structure of the Xia, Shang and Zhou and the Formation of the Huaxia Nation

The Huaxia people were a “self-conscious” one in the early Spring and Autumn and Warring States period. But when did they emerge as a “self-existent nation” before becoming “self-

conscious”? This question is crucial to research on the formation of the Huaxia nation.

Central to *hua*, *xia*, *huaxia*, *zhuxia* and *zhuhua* is the character *xia*. In the Western Zhou Dynasty prior to the Spring and Autumn period, the Zhou used *xia* to indicate that they were the heirs to the orthodox line and had a sense of national integrity that was in accord with the Xia Dynasty. For instance, in the “*Jun Shi*” (君奭 Lord Shi), “*Li Zheng*” (立政 Establishment of Government) and “*Kang Gao*” (康诰 Announcement to Prince Kang) chapters of the *Shangshu* (尚书 *Book of Documents*), the Duke of Zhou refers to the Zhou as Xia.<sup>19</sup> Why did they call themselves Xia? In our view, this is not attributable to kinship, for the Zhou surname was Ji and that of the Xia was Si; they belonged to different clans. The self-referring Xia in the above-mentioned passage of the *Shangshu* was based less on the clan than on the national framework of the Xia Dynasty. Here, the macro-level state structure of the Xia Dynasty corresponds to the people of the Xia, which can be expressed as the Xia as a people or the Xia people. In clan terms, Xia included the people of the Gun and Yu periods prior to the establishment of the Xia Dynasty and, after its establishment, the Si clan of the royal house, in which the Xiahou *buzu* was dominant. As a nation or people, Xia refers to the community comprising a variety of *buzu* within the ruling house after the establishment of the Xia Dynasty: the Xiahou *buzu*, surnamed Si; the Shang *buzu*, surnamed Zi; and the Zhou *buzu*, surnamed Ji. Thus, the Xia as a people refers to the Huaxia people itself. Whereas the Xia as a *buzu* was bound by kinship ties, the Xia as a people had broken these bonds and become linked by a great culture. Thus, the emergence of the Xia as a people bound by cultural ties marks the beginning and origin of the orthodox rule of the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties. For the Zhou Dynasty, which had just overthrown the Shang, it was important to uphold the banner of “We Xia people” as an indication of their inheritance of the orthodoxy of the Xia Dynasty and the legitimacy of the Zhou’s “Heaven-ordained kingship.”

The *hua*, *xia*, *huaxia*, *zhuxia* and *zhuhua* series of terms highlights the fact that the Huaxia nation can be traced as far back as the Xia Dynasty. In other words, the *huaxia* nation was the Xia people of the Xia Dynasty. This is not the same as what archaeologists used to call the “Xia people” of the Xia culture.<sup>20</sup> Rather, it is a community of people comprising a variety of *buzu* within the dynasty (e.g. the Xia *buzu*, the Shang *buzu* and the Zhou *buzu*), based on the unitary yet diversified composite state structure of the Xia Dynasty. At times, the state can be regarded as the outer shell or casing (external framework) of the nation or as a form of national cohesiveness. The composite state of the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties was the outer casing of the Huaxia nation. And it is precisely this composite state structure that catalyzed the formation of the Huaxia nation, joined as it was by Huaxia culture and Huaxia ties of blood.

By composite state structure, we mean that two components made up the Xia, Shang and

19 Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu, *Annotation and Translation of the Shangshu*, p. 1306.

20 Wang Zhenzhong, “A Preliminary Study of the Demarcation between the Xia and Shang Periods and the Periodization and Definition of ‘Xia Culture.’”



Zhou dynasties: the kingdom and its tributary (vassal) states. For instance, the Xia Dynasty comprised the Xiahou-clan kingdom and several subordinate (vassal) states owing fealty to the Xia king; the Shang Dynasty comprised the kingdom's "inner demesne" (内服) territory and the "outer demesne" (外服) vassal states of marquises (候), counts (伯), etc; and the Zhou Dynasty was made up of the Zhou kingdom in the center and the vassal states on the periphery. All these dynasties had developed a twofold composite state structure.

Our view that the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties are of composite state structure, it should be said, reveals the historical characteristics of remote antiquity and fits in with the realities of this period. Scholars who argued that the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties were city-state confederations (方国联盟) tended to overlook their rulers' control over the local vassal states. Other scholars who argued that the three dynasties were unified centralized states tended to ignore the difference between the local vassal states of the Xia-Shang-Zhou period and the administrative divisions under the prefecture and county system (郡县制) operating from the Qin-Han period on. In a composite state structure under the rule of a unified central power, the relationship between the royal domain and its vassal states is unequal. Whereas the former is "a state above states" (国上之国) of the royal house and the common ruler of all under heaven, the vassal states are "states under a state" (国中之国) with incomplete sovereignty or partial independence. The dynasty as a whole comprises the kingdom and the various vassal states subordinate to it and is thus a composite, in much the same way as a composite function in mathematics has a function within a function. The composite state form or structure evolving from the Xia Dynasty developed further in the Shang and Zhou dynasties and reached its pinnacle in the Zhou, when enfeoffment (分封) was practiced on a large scale over a wide range. This has fuelled the entrenched idea that "Of all under heaven, no land is not the king's; from coast to coast, no man is not the king's subject," highlighting the holistic nature of the composite state structure from the perspective of royal power.

Having traced the terms for the Huaxia people and put forward the idea that the composite state structure of the Xia, Shang and Zhou was the outer casing of the Huaxia people in the Xia Dynasty, we can draw the conclusion that the formation of the Huaxia nation began in the Xia Dynasty. Some people may question why no such terms were used in the Shang and Zhou periods. This, we believe, can be ascribed to the distinction between a "self-existent" and a "self-conscious" people. The former refers to a people that is still in an indistinct, latent state of national consciousness and has not yet realized its own existence as a nation. The Huaxia nation in the Xia and Shang period is a case in point. It was not until the Western Zhou that a common Huaxia culture spread and developed and its rituals and codes were perfected, giving rise to the growth of national consciousness. This explains why the Zhou referred to themselves as "We Xia people" and took the Xia as the orthodox line. By the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period, the composite state structure in which the king of Zhou was the "common ruler of all under Heaven" had practically disappeared, in that rulers were no longer responsible for ritual activities and military expeditions and the whole country

was in a state of chaos. The occasional appearance of alien peoples where the Chinese had settled highlighted the sense of crisis and the need to “distinguish between the Hua people and the barbarians” and emphasized the homogeneity of the Chinese nation. Thus the keen consciousness of the Huaxia nation in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period was stimulated by the appearance of alien peoples such as the Rong and the Di. “Distinguishing between the Hua people and the barbarians” meant identifying the differences between Huaxia culture and the Man, Yi, Rong, Di and other barbarian cultures, and highlighting, by way of terms such as *huaxia*, the difference in clothing, rituals and codes between the Chinese nation rooted in the Central Plain and the barbarian peoples. Such a “cultural nation” is of course a “self-conscious” one. The reason why the self-existent Huaxia nation arose in the Xia and Shang period lies precisely in the unified yet diversified composite state structure that encompassed a variety of *buzu* within the framework of a dynastic state.

Further evidence for the argument that the formation of the Huaxia nation began in the Xia Dynasty comes from exegesis of the character *xia*. The *Shuowen Jiezi* says, “Xia, the people of *Zhongguo* (the Central Kingdom or State).” In the “Canon of Yao” (尧典) chapter of the *Shangshu*, we read: “The Man and the Yi rebel against the Xia” (蚩夷猾夏). Zheng Xuan’s annotation explains that Xia refers to the Central Kingdom or State. According to the *Zuo Zhuan* (26<sup>th</sup> year of the Duke of Xiang), “Chu lost Huaxia” (楚失华夏). In the same work (10<sup>th</sup> year of the Duke of Ding), Confucius said, “The peoples on the borders could not conspire against the Xia, and the Yi would not rebel against the Hua people” (裔不谋夏, 夷不乱华). In his commentary on the *Zuo Zhuan*, Kong Yingda annotated: “In the Central Kingdom (*Zhongguo* 中国) there is grandeur of rites and social conduct; that is why it is called Xia.” From the bronze inscriptions of Western Zhou through to the literature of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period, the term *Zhongguo* expanded in meaning from “center of the states” to “Central Plain,” and thence to the common territory—the Yellow River, Huai River, Yangtze River and Han River areas—inhabited by the Huaxia nation during the Qin-Han period. For instance, in the inscription on the Hezun bronze vessel from the early Zhou, *Zhongguo* refers to the Chengzhou/Luoyi area (in present Luoyang City, Henan Province) of the Zhou Dynasty. According to the inscription, after overthrowing the Shang Dynasty, Emperor Wu of Zhou announced to Heaven that he would settle in the “central state” (*Zhongguo*) and rule all under Heaven. Because it was the center of all under Heaven (天下之中), the “*Zuo Luo*” (作雒 The Construction of Luoyi) chapter in *Yi Zhou Shu* (逸周书 *The Lost Book of Zhou*) alludes to the new capital of Chengzhou (the present-day Luoyang) founded by the Emperor Cheng of Zhou as “building the Great City Chengzhou in the center of the lands,” namely the center of the four lands. Probably it was from the Western Zhou on that the “central state” (relative to the Eastern and Southern states) mentioned in the bronze inscriptions of Western Zhou evolved to refer to the center of the land, namely the Central Plain. The emergence of the term “center of all under Heaven” derived from the fact that the capitals of the Xia Dynasty were in this area long before Chengzhou was built. The *Zhu Shu*

*Ji Nian* (竹书纪年 *Bamboo Annals*) records that Emperor Taikang of the Xia Dynasty lived in Zhenxun, which was later home to Emperor Jie. Zhenxun was located in an area stretching from the southwest of Gongyi City to Yanshi City in today Henan Province. And the *Yi Zhou Shu* records the Emperor Wu of Zhou saying to Dan, the Duke of Zhou, that the land between the Luo River and the Yi River was flat, and used to be the seat of the Xia capital. In sum, exegesis of the character *Xia* in the sense of *Zhongguo* has its historical origin in the site of the Xia capital in the Central Plain. This can, of course, be viewed as evidence for tracing the origin of the Huaxia nation to the Xia Dynasty.

The Huaxia nation began to emerge in the Xia Dynasty. The fact that the new dynastic states were the outer casings of the Huaxia nation served as the basic prerequisite for maintaining a stable community of people with a common language, common territory, the same economic life and a common culture, namely the Huaxia nation. The composite structure of the dynastic state enabled it to incorporate different *buzus*, though it also made it difficult to eliminate the relative independence and the boundaries of the different *buzus* within the nation under the Xia, Shang and Western Zhou, particularly under the Xia and the Shang. This is typical of the “self-existent” Huaxia nation of the time.

Since the earliest Chinese nation emerged in the Xia Dynasty, the preceding Five Emperors period can, at best, be regarded as an embryonic period in the origin and formation of the Huaxia nation. We can term it the *buzu* period. Corresponding to this was the birth of the *buzu* states (tribal states or chiefdoms), an early form of state. Therefore, the formation of *buzu* states and their transition into a nation state were peculiar to the post-Five-Emperors period.

#### IV. The Five Emperors Period: From the Confederation of Chiefdoms to the Huaxia Nation

According to the “*Wudi Benji*” (五帝本纪 Basic Annals of the Five Emperors) chapter in Sima Qian’s *Shi Ji* (史记 *Records of the Grand Historian*), “the Five Emperors” refers to the Yellow Emperor, Emperor Zhuangxi, Emperor Ku, Emperor Yao and Emperor Shun. The Five Emperors period can be split into two: the Yellow Emperor period and the period of Emperors Zhuangxi, Ku, Yao and Shun. The “*Hua Ce*” (画策 Policy Planning) chapter of *Shang Jun Shu* (商君书 *The Book of Lord Shang*) records that propriety and hierarchy began to appear in the Yellow Emperor period, with the strong lordship over the weak and the many tyrannizing the few. It was also a time when wars began to break out. In this sense, the Yellow Emperor era was a “heroic age” during which social inequality and polarization emerged but the state had not yet taken shape; that is, it was a chiefdom society in the anthropological sense.

The period from Emperor Zhuangxi to Emperor Yu saw the birth of the early state, evinced in the appearance of punishments and penalties backed by coercive powers. For instance, the *Zuo Zhuan* (15<sup>th</sup> year of Duke Zhao) cited the *Xia Shu* (夏书 *The Book of Xia*) in saying “Disorderly behavior (昏), corruption (墨), theft (贼) and murder (杀); these are the names of crime laid down by Gao Yao.” Gao Yao belonged to an eastern Yi *buzu* before he came to

the Central Plain in the reign of Yao and Shun, so this demonstrates that his code was already in place under Yao and Shun. The “Canon of Yao” chapter of the *Shangshu* says that Gao Yao, “as minister of crime, exercised repression by use of the five kinds of punishment—for the infliction of which there are three appointed places—and the five banishments with their several places of detention, and the three degrees of distance. Be intelligent and you will inspire confidence.” This is also an allusion to Gao Yao’s being appointed Minister of Law in charge of judicial affairs under Shun and employing the *wu xing* (五刑 five punishments). The “*Lü Xing*” (吕刑 Marquis Lü on Punishments) chapter of the *Shangshu* states that “The Miao people are not governed by moral example, but by punishments. They made five oppressive punishments and called them law.” The five punishments were extremely cruel: cutting off one or both feet (刖), cutting off the nose (劓), cutting off the ear (刵), castration (椓) and tattooing (黥). All these show that criminal law had appeared before the Xia Dynasty, and that the period from Emperor Zhuangxi to Emperor Yu represented an early state that possessed coercive public power.

The period from Zhuangxi to Yu corresponds generally to the Longshan archaeological period in the broad sense (30,000 BC-2000 BC).<sup>21</sup> During this period, there emerged two political settings in the Central Plain: a multitude of chiefdoms and the rise of a political chiefdom confederation.

Historical accounts refer to the multitude of chiefdoms as “ten thousand chiefdoms” (万邦) or “ten thousand states” (万国).<sup>22</sup> Archaeological discoveries have revealed a large number of early state capital city sites from the latter part of the period (between 2500 BC and 2000 BC). Among them were the Taosi site in Xiangfen County (Shanxi Province), the Wangchenggang site at Dengfeng City (Henan Province), the Guchengzhai site at Xinmi City (Henan Province), the Chengziya site at Zhangqiu City (Shandong Province), the Dinggong site in Zouping County (Shandong Province), the Tianwang (Tonglin) site at Zibo City (Shandong Province), the Liangchengzhen site at Rizhao City (Shandong Province), the Yaowang site at Rizhao City (Shandong Province), the Shijiahe site in Tianmen County (Hubei Province), the Baodun site at Xinjin County (Sichuan Province), the Shimao site at Shenmu County (Shaanxi Province), the Mojiashan site at Yuhang City, etc. Of course, the pre-Xia “ten thousand states” were multi-layered political entities. They include both early states (what we term *buzu*) and a variety of clans, tribes and chiefdoms (what we term “central settlement forms”). These *buzu* states then formed a political confederation known as a chiefdom confederation. The legends of the abdication of Yao, Shun and Yu in the “Canon of Yao” chapter of the *Shangshu* vividly depict the transfer and inheritance of the confederation headship.

In the “ten thousand chiefdoms” of the Yao, Shun and Yu period, there was no central kingdom that was a “state above states” in the manner of the Xia, Shang or Zhou dynasty.

21 Wang Zhenzhong, “The Legends of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors and Remote Antiquity in China.”

22 See the *Shangshu*, “Canon of Yao”; the *Han Shu*, “Treatise on Geography”; the *Zuo Zhuan*, “The 7<sup>th</sup> Year of Duke Ai”; the *Zhan Guo Ce*, “Strategies of Qi, Part IV”; the *Xunzi*, “Enriching the State,” etc.

Therefore, the head of the confederation was usually elected in a peaceful way, whence the legends about the abdication of Emperors Yao, Shun and Yu. Sometimes, the election would be determined by political and military might, which explains why such accounts as “Shun forced Emperor Yao to quit his throne, and Yu forced Emperor Shun to do so” can be found in the “*Shuo Yi*” (说疑 Answer to the Emperor’s Confusions) chapter of the *Hanfeizi* and the “*Wan Zhang* (I)” (万章) chapter of the *Mencius*. The democratic system reflected in the succession legends of Yao, Shun and Yu is more applicable to the equal relationship among different chiefdoms than to relationships within a particular chiefdom. Therefore, we cannot use these legends to examine the nature of society within that chiefdom; the previous practice of interpreting chiefdom society through the succession legends of Yao, Shun and Yu would seem to be misguided. Likewise, the reason the “*Li Yun*” (礼运 The Conveyance of Rites) chapter of the *Liji* (礼记 *The Book of Rites*) discusses the establishment of a world of Great Harmony (大同世界) for all under heaven is that the chiefdom or confederation of chiefdoms was the highest level of the political system of the time, as a dynastic regime of political monism had not yet come into being. According to the chapter, the modest prosperity of “all under Heaven under one family” (家天下) began with the Xia Dynasty, because a dynastic state regime with unity in diversity at its heart only appeared in the Xia Dynasty. In other words, without the appearance of a king and a kingdom that was a “state above states,” there would have been no political model for “all under Heaven under one family.” The “all under Heaven” in this saying refers to the dynastic state, which comprised both the kingdom in the Central Plain and the various vassal states outside it. That is, its structure was premised on the presence of a “common ruler.”

An overview of the ancient legends and records reveals that Yao, Shun and Yu had dual identities, each of them being at once the ruler of his own chiefdom and the “head” or “hegemon” of the confederation. What passed between Tang Yao (Yao) and Yu Shun (Yu) was the leadership of the confederation, rather than that of the chiefdom.<sup>23</sup> In the past, scholars generally termed the confederation under Yao, Shun and Yu a “tribal confederation.” However, since a number of early states had appeared within the political entity of the “ten thousand chiefdoms” of this period, the relationship between different *buzu* of the period could more appropriately be termed a “confederation of vassal states” or “confederation of chiefdoms.” According to the law that the nature of a thing is determined mainly by the principal aspect of a contradictions, the relationship between Tang Yao, Yu Shun and Xia Yu (Yu) was actually one between different states; it was just that as their relative power rose and fell, they successively headed the confederation of chiefdoms. Such a position preceded that of the “common ruler” of the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties. In other words, the Xia, Shang and Zhou kings’ “common ruler” evolved from the “head” or “hegemon” of the chiefdom confederation under Yao, Shun and Yu.

In terms of nation formation, the states of the Zhuanxu, Yao, Shun and Yu period were all

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23 Wang Shumin, “An Investigation into the History of the Five Emperors Period.”

*buzu* states. The characteristics of a *buzu* state include following: the population or main part of the population in the state belongs to a particular *buzu*, so that kinship still plays an important role in the state's political life; the ruler's name may coincide with that of the *buzu*; and the highest state deity is also the ancestral deity of the *buzu*. At other times, an early state can be set up by a particular *buzu*. In this case, the *buzu* is equivalent to the state. However, due to *buzu* migrations and other reasons, people who had belonged to one *buzu* might establish a number of smaller states. In the development from tribes to ancient nations, *buzu* and *buzu* states served as an important link. However, for existing *buzu*, the confederation of chiefdoms allying different *buzu* became an important link in the transformation from *buzu* to ancient nation and from *buzu* states to ancient nation states. The confederation of chiefdoms in the Central Plain in the Yao, Shun and Yu period comprised a variety of *buzu*, setting the stage for the formation of the subsequent Huaxia nation.

The chiefdom confederation during the Yao, Shun and Yu period contained the Taotang tribe with the surname Qi from the northern Rong and Di, the Siyue and Gonggong tribes with the surname Jiang from the western Jiangrong, the Youyu tribe with the surname Yao, and the Gaoyao tribe with the surname Yan and the Boyi tribe with the surname Ying from the eastern Dongyi. When these people came to the Central Plain, they established a confederation of chiefdoms as well as their own *buzu* states. The people of the *buzu* states shared kinship in the same *buzu*; but those in the confederation had crossed the *buzu* kinship barriers, so that they gradually produced new cultural elements that transcended *buzu* consciousness. These new cultural elements motivated the development of the *buzu* people into a nation, and the transformation from a kinship *buzu* to a culture nation. However, due to the looseness and instability of the confederation, the center of the confederation began to waver as the headship changed. Thus the presence of a few new cultural elements are far from sufficient to define a nation. Rather, nation formation requires a "great state mechanism" that transcends the limits of the vassal states and can encompass different *buzu*. The historical realities of the subsequent Xia Dynasty show that this kind of mechanism is the composite state structure mentioned above. Only this kind of structure could lead to a political model of unity in diversity, gather the dispersed *buzu* states into some form of unified national state, and lead to the genesis of a Huaxia nation bound together by a great culture under a dynastic regime.

In conclusion, with their transformation from a confederation of chiefdoms during the Yao, Shun and Yu period to the composite Xia Dynasty characterized by unity in diversity, the former *buzu* states were cemented into a unified yet diverse dynastic nation state. Accordingly, the Xia Dynasty should be regarded as the upper time limit for the formation of the Huaxia nation.

### **Notes on Contributor**

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