3

Community in Antiquity

Any attempt to understand the traditions through which various kinds of nations and national identities were formed in the late medieval and early modern periods cannot avoid a deep historical perspective stretching back to Near Eastern and classical antiquity, which alone can provide us with a comparative historical framework for a cultural "genealogy" of nations.

Teleology and "Ancient Nations"

However, discussion of the possibility of premodern nations requires particular care, in order to avoid, as far as is possible, any implication of a teleological reading of the historical record.

In his last debate at Warwick, Ernest Gellner quipped that like Adam, nations have no need of navels. It was only necessary to demonstrate that one nation was a modern invention to negate the nationalist belief in premodern nations or even the claim that nations have ethnic origins. And he produced his case of a purely modern invention – Estonia. Perhaps there were better choices, since the Estonians (Ests) were originally a medieval peasant people with a vernacular language and, after the Reformation, a Protestant-based literature and schooling, conquered in the thirteenth century by the Brethren of the Sword under Bishop Albert and ruled thereafter by German overlords until the early twentieth century. However, the point is a serious one, as it seeks to undermine the teleological reading of nations common to nationalists and the allied tendency of many scholars to

a "retrospective nationalism," something that Susan Reynolds and John Breuilly have also castigated.

But neither the nationalist reading of nations nor the tendency to retrospective nationalism is necessary to an argument that many, but *not all*, modern nations have at their historical root ethnic ties of one kind or another which can be used as powerful resources in nation formation and persistence; or the claim that we can speak of *some* pre-modern nations, whether in antiquity or more securely and to a greater extent in the early modern period, and that this is not a purely fortuitous occurrence. Both claims are quite compatible with a moderate modernist position which would argue that most nations have, as a matter of historical fact, emerged after the French Revolution, in many cases using pre-existing cultural ties; but that in a few well-known cases (England, France, Scotland, etc.) the sense of national identity, at least among the elites, was in evidence well before that date. This is very much the claim that I wish to make here.

We also need to bear in mind that, in comparative history and the social sciences, we are dealing with possibilities and probabilities, rather than law-like propositions. Hence the more doctrinaire positions of primordial nationalists (not all nationalists, by the way) and radical modernists must be discarded in fields such as ours that admit of no great certainty. My position is to be understood as a statement of probability, not teleological necessity, which in these fields of enquiry is all that one can ask for. Hence, there is no imputation of a retrospective nationalism in enquiring into the significance of ethnic factors in the formation and persistence of nations and nationalism.

In chapter 1, I argued that as a category of analysis the concept of the nation can, in principle, span all periods and continents. Does this suggest that we might even discover historical forms of national community in our earliest records, that is, in the ancient Near East and classical antiquity?

Actually, the question suggests two kinds of enquiry, one of periodization, the other of cultural genealogy. The first concerns the criteria and evidence for the dating of the "first nations." The issue here is relatively straightforward. Either no historical records of national identity or community exist in this period, and the concept of the nation was unknown in antiquity. Alternatively, we can find at least some evidence for the presence of a national form of community and identity,

as well as some of the processes of nation formation. In both cases, we need to take care not to allow our present understanding of the concept of the modern nation to determine retrospectively our assessment of that evidence.

The other kind of enquiry into cultural traditions and genealogies is more complex. It involves the investigation of the different types of collective identities prevalent in the ancient world to see how far, and in what ways, they may have provided vital cultural legacies for the subsequent formation of nations. This is the enquiry that I believe to be more fruitful and the one that I shall pursue in this and the following chapters. However, something needs to be said about the periodization of nations, and I shall also address the issues it raises. (1)

For modernists, an "ancient nation" in this sense would be a contradiction in terms. Because nations and nationalism are bound up with the more general processes of modernization, any example of nations before the onset of modernity is purely fortuitous. Ernest Gellner, in this respect the most forthright of the modernists, is unequivocal: there might be all kinds of collective cultural and political identities before the onset of modernity, but there was neither need nor room for nations. And it is true that our records of antiquity, for the most part, speak of every kind of collective identity other than that of the nation. Indeed, it is possible that the very strength and durability of these other kinds of collective identity – clan and village, city-state, religion and empire – prevented the development of just those social processes and cultural resources that help to produce and maintain national kinds of community. This is not to say that there is not considerable evidence of shared cultures and a sense of common ethnicity among the populations of the ancient Near East and classical antiquity; and even in some cases of the politicization of culture and ethnicity that comes close to the national type of identity and community. (2)

In this chapter I shall explore briefly three kinds of collective identity and community in the ancient world: empire, city-state, and tribal confederation; and show how, in each case, they have become intertwined with ethnic differences and the cultivation of a sense of distinctive ethnicity. In the following chapters, I hope to show how these three kinds of identity and community provided cultural and religious traditions that helped to form and shape different historical types of nation, mainly in Europe and the West.

Empire and Ethnicity

I start with the ideologies of ancient empires. In the royal propaganda of ancient Egypt, there was a strong emphasis on bounded ethnic groups and clear distinctions between the Egyptian elite and all foreigners. There is no doubt much truth in the view of archaeologist Stuart Tyson Smith, that this was largely a literary and rhetorical topos, a necessary part of Pharaonic propaganda directed internally, to the Egyptian elite and people. Nevertheless, on his own evidence, Egyptians clearly marked the ethnic boundary between themselves and such peoples as their Nubian neighbors in art and architecture, language and literature, dress, food, and burial practices, not to mention their respective pantheons of gods and goddesses. In his study of Egyptian relations with its southern neighbor, Nubia, Tyson Smith shows how clear were the distinctions between Egyptian and Nubian ceramics at the border fortress of Askut, and how important was the large and elaborate fourteenth-century BC Egyptian tomb of the Overseer Siamun at Tombos in Upper Nubia. This suggests that basic ethnic distinctions remained firm over several centuries, despite the frequency of intermarriage with Nubians and the large quantities of Nubian jewelry, cosmetic equipment, and female figurines, alongside Egyptian artifacts and buildings found at Askut. In other words, as Sian Jones' cultural approach to the archaeology of ethnicity had shown, constant exchange across the border served to strengthen, not weaken, the ethnic boundary, and this was continually reinforced by Pharaonic propaganda about the superiority of Egypt to the "chiefs of wretched Kush [Nubia] . . . bearing all their tribute on their backs," as an inscription of the Pharaoh Amenhotep III put it. (3)

In fact, by the Middle Kingdom, a process of Egyptianization of Nubia had set in. It was intensified by the appointment of an Overseer responsible for Kush in the New Kingdom in the mid-second millennium BC. This reconquest was provoked in part by the Pharaohs' need not to have a troublesome kingdom on a second front, while campaigning in Palestine and Syria. But it was also fed by the desire to seize precious Nubian resources of gold, ivory, and ebony, as well as captive slaves. (4)

Egypt is not alone in the divergence of its ethnic practice from its political ideology. The same duality can be found in the Neo-Assyrian empire of the eighth and seventh centuries BC. There was considerable interethnic intercourse and exchange in daily life, trade, and intermarriage.

Plate 1 Gold Mask of Tutankhamun, ca. 1350 BC (Cairo Museum).

Plate 2 Men bringing tribute from Black Africa in presentation to Pharaoh, Tuthmosis IV, ca. 1425–1417 BC (British Museum).

As is well known, the *lingua franca* of the later Assyrian empire was Aramaic, not Assyrian, there was a strong influence of Babylonian cults and religious texts in Nineveh, and Assyrian palaces were filled with Phoenician ivories and furniture. Besides, the deportation of conquered peoples made the later Assyrian empire increasingly cosmopolitan in composition. This is reflected in Assyrian sculpture where, according to Julian Reade, the different appearances and cultures of the peoples they subjugated were portrayed, and where "great care was taken in recording the dress and other distinctive characteristics of foreign peoples." (5)

Nevertheless, despite all this state incorporation and borrowing, Assyrian kings and elites never lost sight of the ultimate purpose of empire, in which, in Mario Liverani's words, beneath the veneer of a sacred form, "the kernel of the whole of the ideology [sc. of Assyrian imperialism] is a *theory of diversity as justification of unbalance and exploitation.*" (6)

Liverani lists various types of diversities – of space, time, goods, and men, and especially the opposition between the residents of the inner

Plate 3   Jehu, king of Israel, bringing tribute to the Assyrian monarch, Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, ca. 825 BC (British Museum).

land and those of the periphery – between the civilized Assyrian and the uncivilized barbarian. Whereas the Assyrians saw themselves as normal, comprehensible, and fully human, foreigners appear strange, speak incomprehensible languages, and so are comparable with animals. In what is a familar pattern of relations between the dominant and subject peoples, the Assyrian ideal harked back to earlier Babylonian, Sumerian, and Akkadian models; hence the polity and society that the Assyrian kings created was essentially a hierarchical ethnic state, a state forged and organized by a dominant *ethnie*, which ruled over and exploited its subject peoples. (7)

Even under the much milder rule of the Persians, this imbalance of ethnic hierarchy was evident. In the propagandist art of the Achaemenid empire, it is true, there is none of the abasement of foreigners typical of Egyptian art, which shows aliens on their knees, or of Assyrian reliefs which depict them stooping or kissing the king's feet. Instead, in the celebrated sculptural reliefs on the staircase of the Apadana in Persepolis, we watch the representatives of various ethnic groups bringing gifts to the Great King, not bearing tribute, in a calm, dignified procession. For Carl Nylander, this expressed "a timeless idea of universal and cosmic order upheld by divine assistance and mutual loyalty between king and subjects" – a point which Josef Wiesehofer's recent study supports to some extent:

> typical products of each of the peoples, or luxury goods, are brought to the king and thus symbolise the solidarity between monarch and subjects, whether this is felt as genuine or prescribed by the monarch. (8)

On the other hand, as Darius' famous inscription of 519 BC on the rockface of Behistun testified, the Achaemenid empire was based on a clear ethnic hierarchy. Darius himself emphasizes his Persian origins, and Herodotus tells us that the empire was ruled by an absolute monarch drawn from the ranked aristocracy of the province of Persis and its tribe of Pasargadae and "the clan (*phratria*) of the Achaemenids, from which the kings of Persia are drawn." The ethnic nature of the hierarchy of imperial Persia is underlined by the fact that the Persian commoners, mainly small farmers, were exempted from the tribute (*phoros*), to which most of the subject peoples were liable, with the exception of a few peripheral peoples. (9)

Plate 4   Eastern staircase of Apadana, Persepolis, ca. 500 BC.

If we consider the royal inscriptions and sculptures, the same mix-ture of toleration and hierarchy is evident. On the one hand, we know of various edicts of royal sympathy with the religious and cultural auto-nomy of the subject peoples: Cyrus' taking the hand of Bel of Babylon, and Cyrus' and Darius' edicts restoring exiled Judeans to Jerusalem, are only the best known. On the other hand, we can read Darius' inscription in Susa about the building of its citadel with foreign labor both ways, as a boast about ethnic harmony and as legitimizing eth-nic exploitation. But, even on the more favorable reading, any royal concern for ethnic diversity and cultural autonomy was counterbal-anced by the political and social distance kept by the Great King and his aristocracy from the subject peoples, a distance reinforced by the closed nature of the Old Persian language and script and of early Persian "Avestan" religion. Nor did the official picture of hierarchical ethnic harmony safeguard the empire from various ethnic revolts, most notably in Egypt and Ionia. (10)

In everyday practice, there is considerable ethnic fluidity and fre-quent transactions across the boundary, as Fredrik Barth argued. But this is counteracted by the weight of ideology and political action. Here,

ethnic distinctions are built into the fabric of the hierarchical systems of empires, and foreigners are generally treated as different, unintelligible, and often inferior. It was a model that tended to reproduce itself in different periods and continents, and in due course it was to prove a fertile source for the creation of national kingdoms.

City-State and Ethnic Identity

Already in the third millennium BC on the alluvial plains of ancient Sumer, the city-state was well developed as a focus of exclusive loyalty. In the Early Dynastic period, city-states like Eridu, Ur, Uruk, Lagash, and Nippur, each under the protection of one or more of the deities of the Sumerian pantheon, and ruled by their local lord or *ensi*, a council of elders and their temple priests, vied for supremacy, only to fall prey in the end to the ambitions of Sargon of Agade who established the first Mesopotamian empire ca. 2350 BC. After the fall of the Akkadian empire, there was a brief efflorescence of Sumerian culture under the Third Dynasty of Ur at the end of the third millennium which saw an attempt to revive the "golden age" of the Early Dynastic period, before another period of tribal invasions by the Guti, Lullubi, Tidnumites, and Elamites, followed by renewed city-state rivalry and the ultimate rise of Babylon. Throughout this period, though there was a Sumerian cultic center at Nippur, and though the Sumerian city-states formed a network of cultural and economic activity, it is doubtful how far we may speak of any clearcut sense of Sumerian ethnicity, let alone ethnic unity. Perhaps the only commonalities were cultural: the Sumerian language and its rich literature, with its myths of common origins, and the Sumerian pantheon of gods and goddesses, which subsequent Mesopotamian city-states from Akkad to Babylon adopted and supplemented. (11)

Similar rivalries beset the "Canaanite" city-states of Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine in the Bronze and Iron Ages. Again, any commonalities are linguistic and cultural, notably a pantheon of shared deities, the cults of "high places," and massive fortified cities, along with the development of a Canaanite dialect and alphabetic script. Though we hear of a "land of Canaan," a name recognized by New Kingdom Egyptians, Syrians like Idrimi and the Bible, "whether it [sc. "Canaan"] was a territorial name or designated a people, in the first place, cannot now be determined." (12)

What is certain is that the city-state was the focus of allegiance and provided the arena of political and commercial activity, notably the city-states of Ugarit, Byblos, Tyre, Sidon, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer. No Canaanite cultic, let alone political, center emerged to overshadow or unite the often warring city-states, and the same is true of the Phoenician city-states – it was the Greeks who termed the coastal Canaanites *phoinikes* after the purple dye used there. Neither the "Phoenicians" themselves nor the Old Testament recognized a concept of "Phoenicia"; the Old Testament speaks of "the Sidonians," the "king of Tyre," and so on. (13)

However, it was in ancient Greece that the city-state achieved its most developed form. Even among their Mycenaean forebears, city-states like Tiryns, Argos, and Mycenae, ruling over the surrounding countryside, constituted the political norm. Of course, as elsewhere, kinship ties were crucial, both in everyday life and for political rule and especially for the orderly succession of kingship. So was the tracing of genealogies in the different Greek subgroups of Ionians, Dorians, Aeolians, and Boeotians. Such cultural and genealogical divisions continued to resonate in the classical age and were even used as late as the fifth century as pretexts for the policies of the "Ionian" Athenians and "Dorian" Spartans in the Peloponnesian War. (14)

In the archaic age (eighth to sixth centuries BC), after the overthrow of aristocratic rule, the Greek *polis* developed its distinctive ethos and institutions, especially under the tyrants who were often linked to the rise of the propertied hoplite "class." In this period, any sense of common "Greek" identity was constructed through myths of origins, genealogies, and rituals by groups claiming descent from *Hellen* of Thessaly, the place where Thucydides located the first Greeks. This process may have been hastened by the new, more exclusive rights of citizenship in the emerging city-states with their growing insistence on territory and residence, but also on descent, in determining citizenship. It was certainly reinforced by the Persian Wars of the early fifth century when the stereotypical contrast between the servile "barbarian" subjects of the Great King and the "free" Greek city-state became prevalent, a contrast that already appears in Aeschylus' *Persae* (472 BC). (15)

But it was Herodotus who, once again, through the mouths of the Athenian envoys to Sparta in 479 BC, defined and articulated a sense of common Greek ethnicity, based on
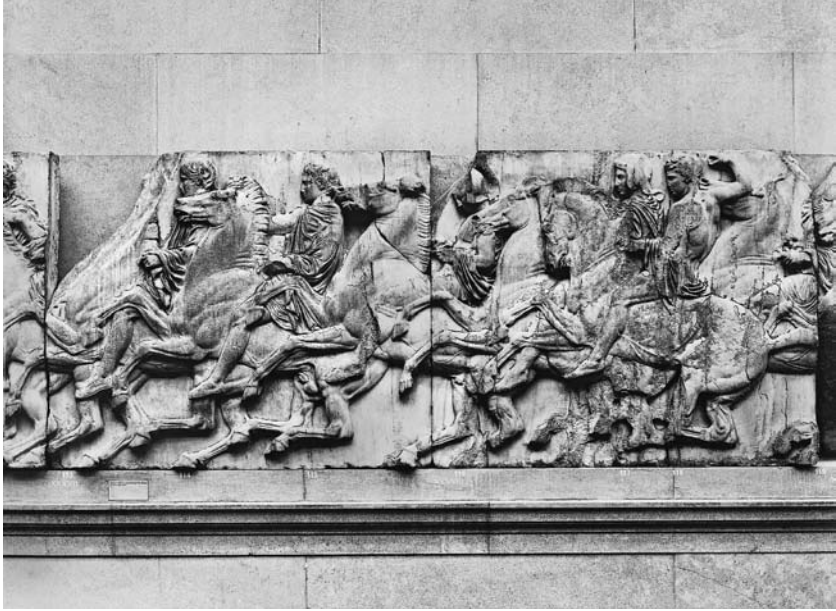
Plate 5 Group of young horsemen, North Frieze of Parthenon,
Athens, ca. 442–438 BC (British Museum).

> the statues of the gods and the temples which have been burnt and destroyed
> . . . the common blood and tongue that we Greeks share, together with
> the common cult places, the sacrifices and similar customs . . . (16)

And yet, for all the stereotypes of pan-Hellenic propaganda, a Greek's
first loyalty was to his or her city-state. After all, not a few of the cit-
ies went over to the Persians in 480 BC, and it was their intense
commercial and political rivalries, above all, those between Athens,
Corinth, and Sparta, that plunged the Greek world into the long, bit-
ter, and divisive Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC). In the following
century, neither the philosopher Isocrates' pan-Hellenism nor king
Agesilaus of Sparta's expedition against the Persians could unite the
Greek city-states, and it took Philip's victory at Chaeronea to enforce
unity, at least temporarily. Despite their many shared cultural and
religious beliefs and practices – in language and literature, art and
architecture, festivals and Games, as well as the Olympian pantheon
– attempts to unify the Hellenes politically foundered on the rocks
of an exclusive city-state loyalty and patriotism. (17)

For many Greeks, the city-state comprised a world apart, and in the case of Athens, it may actually have been more than a *polis*. In extent, population size, and the large number of its *astoi* – residents with important social, though not political, rights – Athens constituted what Aristotle termed an *ethnos*. According to Edwin Cohen, in the fifth century the Athenian *ethnos* even acquired a myth of autochthonous origins in the lineage of king Erechtheus. Does this allow us to designate Athens and its surrounding countryside, Attica, an ancient "nation" – in size as large as Iceland? After all, its members had a clear sense of collective selfhood *vis-à-vis* other city-states, with a (lately constructed) myth of common origins, a strong territorial attachment, a public culture, and standardized laws and customs. And yet, how distinctive was this public culture and how unique the ensemble of its myths, memories, and symbols? After all, many of them were shared with other Greeks, notably with city-states in their own Ionian ethnic subgroup. Certainly, Pericles in his famous Funeral Oration, as transmitted by Thucydides, tried to instill in his fellow-citizens a sense of Athenian cultural primacy and political leadership of Greece, as well as the ideal of noble sacrifice of life itself on behalf of their city in the Peloponnesian War. But, the war in which these Athenians fell was an intra-Hellenic war, not one fought against the Persians, and the leadership to which Pericles' Athenians aspired was very much at the expense of their allies in the Delian League. Besides, Pericles did not say that his fellow-citizens should "fall in love" with Greece or the Hellenes, but with the city-state of Athens alone. (18)

But, whether or not we agree with the contention of Edwin Cohen and Aviel Roshwald that Athens might be seen as a nation and a national state, the ancient Greek *polis* left a vital cultural legacy for later ages and states. This was partly due to the way in which Alexander and his successors used it as a model for the hellenization of the Near East, and partly because the fierce loyalty to the *polis* was framed by wider shared cultural and religious Hellenic networks. As a result, the ideal of political solidarity and liberty of the *polis* became part of the wider literary and artistic heritage of ancient Greece, which was transmitted through Arab and Byzantine scholars to medieval and early modern Western Europe, offering a model of republican community based on an intense kind of citizen equality and patriotism. With the return to classical antiquity and the Greek revival, this model became an inspiration for those ideals of autonomy and unity that modern nationalists

were to make into central tenets of the new secular religion of the people. As a result, the city-state, far from being diametrically opposed to or obstructive of ethnic and national community, actually came to serve as one of the nation's most widespread pillars and molds, providing it with some of its enduring features and its most significant historical forms.

Ethnic Identity and Tribal Confederation

Our third type of collective cultural and political identity, tribal confederation, might appear at first sight to have much more affinity with ethnic and national forms of community. For some, in fact, "tribe" and "ethnic group" are closely related, if not interchangeable, terms. But, if we adhere to a meaning that sees the tribe as not just a cultural group but as the political expression of segmented lineages, then we can see that tribes and tribal confederations could also undermine, and obstruct, a sense of wider ethnic identity, let alone the emergence of nations – as the frequent tribal feuds suggest.

　An early example of such a confederation, the *Amurru*, or "Amorites," first appears in northern Syria in Akkadian and Sumerian documents of the late third millennium BC. Immigrant workers in the cities of Sumer and Akkad, they were known as Martu in Sumerian and by their wanderings were felt to be a threat to civilized life. These semi-nomads are described as

> the Martu who does not know houses, who does not know cities, the uncouth man who lives in the mountains, . . . the Martu, people of raiders, with animal instincts, like wolves. (19)

Subsequently, the Amurru penetrated the defensive wall built near Babylon to keep them out, and individual Amorites took power in the Sumerian cities, with Hammurabi of Babylon taking the title of "lugal Amurru," king of Amurru. But in this period, the "Amorite" tribes are recorded individually as Haneans, Suteans, Amnanu, Rabbu, and so on; and it is clear that, scattered in villages, and working as peasants and semi-nomadic shepherds, they failed to coalesce in a pan-Amorite confederation; and, apart from a fourteenth-century kingdom of Amurru in central Syria, their name became merely a memory or geographical term in the Assyrian annals.

We are on firmer ground with the later Aramean confederation. In the early first millennium BC, various Aramean kingdoms are documented, the most important being Aram-Zobah, Aram-Damascus, and Arpad in Syria, Aram-Naharaim, Bit-Adini, and Bit-Zamani in north Mesopotamia, and Bit-Dakuri and Bit-Amukkani in southern Babylonia near the Persian Gulf. If they constituted a threat to Assyria in the eleventh and tenth centuries, and to the kingdom of Israel in the ninth century, their great geographical spread and heterogeneous organization appear to have precluded a stable cultural, let alone political, unity. Even successive Assyrian onslaughts on the Aramean kingdoms in Syria from the ninth to seventh centuries failed to mobilize a pan-Aramean sentiment, though they did unite segments of the Arameans under the dominant city-state of the period – Damascus in the ninth and Arpad in the eighth century. (20)

This is not to say that the Arameans did not share common cultural practices. There was, after all, a common Aramaic language and script. There was also the growing importance of the cult of the Aramean storm-god, Hadad, at least in Syria. And then there were the repeated alliances of the Aramean kingdoms against Assyria. For these reasons, according to Steven Grosby, the Arameans of Syria may have constituted an incipient nationality; this is a not unreasonable inference from the wording on the Sefire stele of ca. 750 BC recording a treaty between two Aramean kings, Mati-el of Arpad and Bir-Ga'yah of KTK (an unknown kingdom), which speaks of "all-Aram," including perhaps "upper Aram" and "lower Aram." (21)

On the other hand, it has to be said that the common Aramaic language and script became so widely diffused as to constitute the *lingua franca* of the Near East in the first millennium, partly as a result of the large-scale deportations of Arameans by the Assyrian kings, and it was often used by Assyrian rulers to address their subjects. Hence, rather than help to define an Aramean *ethnie*, some have argued that the forcible mingling of peoples and their assimilation to a common language was instead one of the key facets of the rise of an *Assyrian* national state. Be that as it may, neither a common Aramaic language nor the precedence of the cult of Hadad could forge a wider unity and overrule the pre-eminence of local Aramean city gods – or prevent frequent border disputes between the several Aramean kingdoms. (22)

There is perhaps stronger evidence for regarding the semi-nomadic Edomite tribes as a cultural, if not a political, unity. In the biblical

account, as Grosby points out, the Edomites appear as a unified king-
dom blocking the path of the wandering Israelites after the Exodus.
The book of Numbers refers to a people called '*edomi* (Edomites) and
a territory, *kol 'edom* (all Edom) with borders around Mount Seir
(Numbers 20:16, 23). We also know that in the ninth century BC,
they engaged in political alliances and conflicts with Hamath, Tyre,
and Sidon, as well as with Israel and Judah. Again, there seems to
have been a supreme god, Qaush, of perhaps a pantheon that in-
cluded a goddess called Edom, but just how important worship of
Qaush was to the identity of an Edomite is unknown. For the bibli-
cal authors, Edom and Edomites were close to Judah, in terms of both
territory and tribal genealogies, and there are hints that the worship
of Yahweh originated in Edomite lands – though they were much later
forcibly converted to Judaism by the Hasmoneans. But how far they
constituted a separate ethnic community (*ethnie*) with a shared myth
of origins and common memories and culture is unclear. (23)

The Case of "Ancient Israel"

It is only when we turn to the Israelite tribal confederation that we
have sufficient evidence to enable us to make a judgment about the
degree to which we can legitimately speak of an ethnic, or a national,
community and identity. Sufficient perhaps, but not decisive, as the
many conflicting opinions about all aspects of "ancient Israel" testify.
On the other hand, the long-term significance of the ancient Israelite
and Judahite experiences for the subsequent formation of nations is
difficult to overestimate.

   The name "Israel" is first found on the stele of the Pharaoh
Merneptah (ca. 1210 BC), which lists the places and ethnic groups in
Canaan that he claims to have conquered or destroyed. But it is not
clear whether Israel is on this occasion a territorial or ethnic designa-
tion, or both. "Israel" appears next on the stele of king Mesha of Moab
(ca. 830 BC) and in the Assyrian annals as that of the biblical north-
ern kingdom, alongside the southern kingdom of Judah. In the bib-
lical books of Joshua and Judges, we read of a series of conflicts between
Israelite tribes and various Canaanite "tribes" and city-states, and with
the Philistines, Edomites, Ammonites, and Moabites. This would
suggest a measure of political unity, perhaps even a league of the kind

once proposed by Martin Noth. But the Book of Judges also empha-
sizes the divisions between the various Israelite tribes, those in the
south, those in the east across the Jordan, in the central hill country,
and the rather separate northern tribes – with the central cult of Yahweh
at Shiloh appearing to exert little political influence. (24)

The question of the origins of Israel and of its unique faith in Yahweh
– a question that continues to divide scholars – is bound up with the
origins and nature of the Covenant that marks out the Israelite tribes
from others, and which was to have such a profound influence on the
subsequent formation of nations. Even if "Israel" originally design-
ated an ethnically mixed group of Aramean nomads from the east and
Canaanite peasants fleeing to the hill country in the wake of the break-
down of Egyptian rule after 1300 BC, the centrality of the hill tribe
of Ephraim, to which Joshua, the servant of Moses, belonged, and
the gradual assimilation of the cult of the Canaanite high god, *El*, by
that of Yahweh, marks the beginning of a long process of growing
ideological if not always political unification. Moreover, while some
scholars like Gosta Ahlström treat the Exodus and Moses narratives
as secondary, others like Irving Zeitlin find a broad accord between
the biblical account in the Pentateuch and Near Eastern custom and
usage in this period. Despite these disagreements, the fact remains that
by the time of Saul (ca. 1000 BC), the Israelite hill tribes, together
with Benjamin and Judah, had realized a fair degree of political unity,
which has led at least one scholar to claim that a number of Israelite
tribes did already acknowledge a fairly close relationship, and even a
"fairly close union of a national type based on religion" – though with-
out clearly defining the meaning of the term "national" in this, or any,
period. (25)

The scholarly debates over the United Monarchy are equally divi-
sive, with some scholars dismissing it as post-Exilic propaganda, while
others, on the basis of the biblical account and some disputed archae-
ological evidence, are prepared to accept a scaled-down version of the
narrative in the first Book of Kings. Again, it is the subsequent myth
of a glorious kingdom, of the valiant David and the wise Solomon,
reputed authors of many of the psalms and proverbs, that is sig-
nificant. The United Monarchy came to represent a "golden age"
that was rendered so much more poignant by the bitter subsequent
division into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Yet, from the start,
kingship in Israel was viewed ambivalently – as sacred, even messianic,

but also as deeply suspect and corrupting, as the prophets make abundantly clear – an ambivalence that would re-echo and haunt Western civilization. (26)

Despite the subsequent divisions, by choosing Jerusalem as the capital and building the Temple there, David and the United Monarchy did provide a basis for the rise of territorial attachments and a distinctive public culture centered on the worship of Yahweh. While the northern kingdom of Israel saw a continuous struggle between the dominant Baal cult of Phoenicia and worship of Yahweh, as recorded in the cycle of Elijah stories, the smaller southern kingdom of Judah, though also troubled by foreign cults, was able to pursue a more consistent policy of religious unification based on the Temple worship and the ideal of the Covenant. Even there, only after the destruction of the northern kingdom by Assyria in 722 BC and the flight from the north of many refugees with their religious traditions to Judah, could a thoroughgoing process of religious reforms be inaugurated. From the reign of Hezekiah in the late eighth century to that of the late seventh-century king Josiah, the kingdom and people of Judah appear to have become a more self-consciously monolatrous society and ethnic community, with a clearer sense of origins and shared historical memories. This development was aided by four factors: the influence of favorably minded kings like Hezekiah, the impact of prophetic activity from Isaiah and Micah to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the discovery of the Deuteronomic lawcode in the Temple in 621 BC, and the probable editing of Deuteronomy and the historical books. Above all, it was the result of the rise of a textual culture disseminated from the court and Temple in the capital, following the rapid urbanization of Jerusalem in the wake of the Assyrian destruction of Samaria in 722 BC and Sennacherib's invasion of Judah in 701 BC. The desire of the royal court to project its power and legitimacy by founding a library, as in Egypt and Assyria, and the associated increase in literacy, helped to record and shape the memories, myths, and traditions of both the refugee northern and the southern tribes into a coherent ethnohistory centered on the Davidic golden age. (27)

For many scholars, the reforms of king Josiah (639–605 BC) are regarded as crucial for the shaping of the Bible and the rise of a Judahite ethnic consciousness. Though archaeologists are divided about the "fit" between many of the geographical and ethnic observations in the Pentateuch and the expansion of Josiah's kingdom in the wake of Assyria's retreat after 628 BC, there is little dispute about the sig-

nificance of Josiah's religious campaign against the foreign cults and high places (*asherot* and *bamot*), the discovery of the Deuteronomic lawcode in the Temple, and the public reading of it which king Josiah organized in front of

> the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord. (II Kings 23:2)

For Steven Grosby, these events attest the growth of a sense of national community and identity. There is the involvement of the populace, the dissemination of a public culture, observance of common laws and customs, and growing attachment to a common territory "from Dan to Beer-sheba," which Josiah sought to reclaim. (28)

Even if we concede Grosby's claim that an idea of nationality can be discerned in this period, we need to exercise caution. To begin with, it was probably an elite affair, and one that was confined to Jerusalem and its immediate environs. The persistence of idolatrous cults in the countryside reveals the limits of any sense of national community based on shared religious observance. Second, its manifestation was all too brief. After Josiah's death in battle in 609 BC and the deportation of Judean elites to Babylon by Nebuchadrezzar in 597 BC, and finally with the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC, the remaining rural population almost certainly continued with their former idolatrous cults. Once again, the survival of a sense of Judean ethnic identity and religious monotheism was confined to the elites who collected and edited the pre-Exilic writings in Babylon and some of whom returned to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem several years after Cyrus' edict of toleration in 538 BC. However, the small and desolate Persian province of Yahud around Jerusalem was only revived through the intervention of Nehemiah as the king's emissary and the reforms of Ezra the scribe, especially his ban on intermarriage with the surrounding populations. But it was Ezra's public reading of the Torah and his elevation of the Mosaic law that helped to define, as Peter Ackroyd put it, membership of the community:

> There are marriage limitations imposed; there is an emphasis on purity, the defining of the community in terms of its acceptability to the deity – foreign marriages and hence alien religion represent a threat to community life. (29)

While this evidence points to a revived ethnic community defined in religious and ritual terms, and one that continued to collect and collate myths of origin and sacred ethnohistories and enact rituals in the sacred Hebrew language, can we speak of a (renewed) national community, however small and precarious? Unfortunately, there is scant evidence for the Persian and early Hellenistic periods, except in terms of inferences from later Pharisaism to the earlier Men of the Great Synagogue. Only with the split between Hellenizers and *Hasidim* in Jerusalem under the Seleucids in the early second century BC, and the subsequent revolt of the Maccabees in 167 BC against Antiochus IV Epiphanes' misguided attempts at religious and cultural conformity by installing the worship of Zeus in the Temple, can we begin to discern the lineaments of a national community, albeit one that was divided and subject to conflicting pressures. Centered on monotheism, Torah, and Temple, and beginning to define Jewishness in both religious and ritual terms, the Jews were increasingly recognized as a separate nation with a distinctive public culture, law, language, and territory, even though they shared much of their material culture with the Hellenistic world around them. (30)

Nations in Antiquity?

From this all too brief survey of selected cases of collective cultural and/or political identities and communities in the ancient world, we can now ask to what extent a sense of common ethnicity was prevalent, and whether it makes sense to speak of "nations" in antiquity. Here I can only suggest some provisional conclusions.

It appears, first, that the most common and widespread forms of collective cultural and political identities, above the level of the clan and village, were the city-state and the tribal confederation. Even imperial identities originated in one of these two kinds of community – city-states in Mesopotamia and tribal groupings in the case of the Medes and Persians – and continued to be based on them. To this generalization, Egypt stands as a partial exception, though cities like Memphis and later Thebes afforded bases for successive dynasties.

Second, unless one adopts a definition of the concept of "tribe" that equates it to that of an ethnic community or *ethnie*, ethnic ties

rarely formed the basis for a complete and exclusive society in the ancient world. Instead, we find them generally intertwined with each of these types of cultural and/or political identity and community. Besides, quite often, ethnicity seems to have been ascribed by others, and was not necessarily self-ascribed, as in the case of the "Phoenician" city-states, discussed above.

Third, where ethnic ties are visible, we can distinguish three levels of community. In the first, which I termed an *ethnic category* in chapter 2, we find a loose aggregation of groups with some similar cultural practices from a particular area, a named territorial and cultural category recorded by outsiders, like the Guti and Lullubi who helped to overthrow the Sumerian dynasty of Ur around 2000 BC. In the second, which was designated an *ethnic network*, these groups, usually tribes or city-states, form a field of cultural activity exhibiting a degree of cultural commonality, but rarely any political unity; here I cited the Aramean tribal confederations and the Sumerian city-states. It is not always easy to distinguish ethnic networks from ethnic categories, but, unlike the latter, elite members of ethnic networks tend to possess myths of common origins and shared memories, if little solidarity.

What, I think, distinguishes the *ethnie* is its elaboration of shared memories into a composite "ethnohistory" of the kind that we encounter in ancient Greece, in the writings of Herodotus and Thucydides, and in ancient Israel. In the ancient Greek case, despite the centrifugal forces of city-state loyalty, the Greek-speaking and Olympian-worshipping communities were conscious of their relatedness and myths of common ancestry (despite the many variations) and proud of their difference from, if not superiority to, non-Greek *barbaroi*, something that clearly marked off their colonies from the neighboring Mediterranean peoples. It was for this reason that Moses Finley, following Meinecke, termed the ancient Greeks a *Kulturnation* – in my terms an *ethnie* with shared ancestry myths, common historical memories, a common culture, and a degree of solidarity – because of their lack of political and territorial unity. Similar considerations apply to the Israelites. For a time, tribal disunity was overcome in the face of the Philistine invasions, but after David had removed the threat, north–south differences resurfaced and the kingdom was divided. However, this did not destroy the close cultural links between them. The histories of the kingdom of Israel were recorded along with those of Judah, and both were included in the Books of Kings. (31)

But, finally, can we speak of "nations" in the ancient world? Can we discern at least some of the processes that encourage the formation of communities approximating to the ideal type of the nation? If we accept the definition I proposed in chapter 1, a named and self-defined human community whose members cultivate common myths, memories, symbols, values, and traditions, reside in a historic homeland, disseminate a distinctive public culture, and observe common laws and customs, then I believe we can show that some of these basic processes were operative, and that in a very few cases they encouraged the formation of nations, at least for some periods of their existence. To this end, four cases can be considered from the ancient world, three empires and a kingdom: the Neo-Assyrian empire, the Persian empire, ancient Egypt, and the kingdom of Judah, and later of Judea.

It may seem strange to suggest, given their logical opposition, that an empire might also constitute or be an extension of a nation, or vice versa. But we are quite happy to allow, for example, the nineteenth-century French nation "its" empire, or more precisely to say that a French state that acquired an empire had become, or was becoming, a national community. Might not the same be true in the ancient world? (32)

The Neo-Assyrian empire

To describe the Neo-Assyrian empire as a nation could mean either that the Assyrians constituted a nation in their own right, while ruling over a number of other communities, or that the whole Assyrian empire, in its later stages, had become or was in the process of becoming a single nation.

Earlier, I underlined the hierarchical and exploitative nature of Assyrian rule. But what of the Assyrians themselves? They were a named and self-defining community, with an aristocratic myth of origins from the city of Assur and its eponymous god, shared memories of their kings' exploits recorded in the royal annals, a common language, and, among the nobles, a status pride and sense of superiority to their own commoners on their estates and to the subject peoples. Given this elite solidarity, we may legitimately speak of an Assyrian ethnic community.

On the other hand, evidence of special feelings towards an Assyrian homeland or sense of sacred territory outside the "land of Assur" itself is scarce; nor was there a single capital. Second, beyond some cults

of the Assyrian deities, and palace art and royal propaganda, there appears to have been little effort to disseminate an Assyrian public culture across the empire. Captives or visitors to Nimrud or Nineveh might be overawed, but we hear little of a distinctive Assyrian public culture being purveyed to Assyrian commoners, let alone to the foreign subject peoples. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, Neo-Assyrian culture was greatly indebted to the religious cuneiform texts and Akkadian literary culture of Babylon, which was regarded as canonical and a golden age to be revived. As for standardizing common laws and customs, apart from regular tribute, military conscription, and some royal edicts, the mass of the subjects who remained in their lands were implicitly allowed to retain their local customs and laws. (33)

Alternatively, could we describe the territory annexed and the society created by the Neo-Assyrian empire as a nation-state, at least in its later stages? This is the thesis recently propounded by Simo Parpola. With the American model in mind, Parpola argues that the two processes of regular deportations and cultural assimilation helped to forge a new, more compact and homogeneous society. By forcibly mingling the peoples of the ancient Near East, granting many of them citizenship rights, and assimilating them through a common language, Aramaic, and a common script, the Aramaic alphabet, the Assyrians were for the first time in history consciously forging a nation-state. It is an attractive thesis. There is no doubt that these trends did help to promote a new, more cosmopolitan society by breaking down the isolation of peoples in the ancient Near East. On the other hand, the American parallel is misleading. The United States was, and is, an immigrant society, which the individual members of its various ethnic groups chose to enter and in which they voluntarily adopted the American way of life while retaining many of their own customs, beliefs, and habits. Besides, from the first the United States was a popular republic, based on the civic national ideology of its founding fathers. No such national ideology can be found in Assyria, immigration was highly coercive, and the relationship of the Assyrian rulers to the subject peoples was, as we saw, generally exploitative. Essentially, the Neo-Assyrian empire remained a case of ethnic hierarchy based on military force and economic domination. The almost universal jubilation that greeted Assyria's downfall, and the near total disappearance of the Assyrian *ethnie* along with its state, confirms the failure of the Assyrian "national" project, if such it was. (34)

Achaemenid Persia

Many of the same considerations apply to Achaemenid Persia. We can concur in describing a Persian *ethnie*: a named and self-defining human community, with a myth of common ancestry attached to the ruling house in which the nobles shared (tracing the lineage of the leading clan of Achaemenes, of the Pasargadae tribe), shared memories of the king's exploits and battles won (as Darius boasts on his epitaph at Persepolis), a common Old Persian language, and a common belief in the blessing of Ahura-Mazda on the Persian kings and nobles, in a timeless and harmonious cosmic order.

But, once again, this describes an ethnic hierarchy at odds with the idea of a national community. Thus, though it was praised for its rich agriculture, the land of Persis in southwest Iran, the seat of Achaemenian power, held no special or sacred status, nor was there a single capital in the two centuries of the empire. Its public culture, too, was largely reserved for the Persian nobles and important foreign emissaries, and again there was a linguistic division, with Aramaic, the *lingua franca*, used for public communications with the subject peoples. Though Persian rule was certainly less brutal, the role of the subject peoples was well portrayed, as we saw, in the processions of ethnic groups bearing gifts to the Great King on the Apadana staircase at Persepolis, or in the royal inscription at Susa, which lauded the labor and resources of the subject peoples. Both convey the sense of majesty and distance between rulers and ruled in a far-flung empire. The only difference from earlier empires was the more explicit toleration of local laws and customs, stemming from Cyrus' policy, and hence a less overt desire to integrate the subject peoples in a single multiethnic community. The later attempts by Parthian and Sasanian dynasties to hark back to the model of Achaemenid Persia provides an interesting contrast with the fate of Assyria. (35)

Ancient Egypt

The case of ancient Egypt is more complex. Isolated by its geography and united by the Nile, an Egyptian community and identity evolved for nearly a millennium under the unitary state of the Old Kingdom. This aided the development of myths of origin, in their various creation myths, but the relative lack of contact with others before the

Middle Kingdom may have delayed a clear sense of self-definition. But, as we saw in the case of relations with Nubia, by the early second millennium the aristocracy had developed a clear conviction of Egyptian superiority to foreigners, along with many myths, memories, and symbols, and a nostalgia for the golden age of the glorious Fourth Dynasty in which Amenemhet I chose to set his propagandist tract known as *The Prophecy of Nerferti* to justify his usurpation of the throne in 1991 BC. Perhaps more telling is the Egyptian attachment to the Black Land nourished by the Nile. In the well-known fictional *Tale of Sinuhe* in the same period, a high official of the court who had fled to Syria to avoid being wrongfully accused of being involved in the conspiracy to murder Amenemhet recounts his flight, his long sojourn in exile, and his desire to be buried in Egypt in the land of his fathers according to Egyptian burial rites, which were later accorded him. At one point, Sinuhe laments:

> I am even so a foreigner whom none loveth, any more than a Bedouin would be loved in the Delta . . . What is a greater matter than that my corpse should be buried in the land wherein I was born?

From a later period, one might also cite the desire of Kamose, Pharaoh in Thebes, to "save Egypt which the Asiatics have smitten," and the clear sense of Egyptian rulers of Egypt's historic boundaries, from the Delta to Elephantine in the south; though how far the land was held to be not just blessed but sacred is unclear. (36)

That ancient Egyptian elites created a distinctive and enduring public culture of rituals, ceremonies, and symbols, supported by a language and hieroglyphic script, and a system of education, is undeniable. It was perhaps the most impressive and all-embracing of public cultures. At its center was an ideology of divine kingship, which claimed that the Pharaoh was the incarnation of the falcon-god Horus and son of the sun-god Ra and that it was his duty, through the performance of public rituals and wise government, to ensure that *Ma'at* (justice or truth) prevailed in the world of men. According to Barry Kemp, this ideology was

> continually reinforced in provincial association by ritual and by the iconography of ritual which, for example, made the king responsible for the ceremonies of the provincial temples.

Though the children of nobles and scribes had a separate education, men from lower classes could be admitted into the culture that supported this ideology. And though we cannot gauge how far it was disseminated outside the elites, it is worth recalling that this was the only type of public culture to which Egyptians were exposed for two and a half millennia (with the exception of the short interlude of Akhnaten's "heresy"). (37)

Ancient Egypt is often depicted as a highly regulated society. This may have been the result of a long tradition of centralized authority developing early on, when Egypt was largely free of external threats and could therefore forge a more integrated community in which standardized law and bureaucratic regulation played a large part, because of the need to harness the effects of the annual flooding of the Nile. To some extent, this model was carried into Palestine and Syria, when Egypt acquired an empire under the New Kingdom; at the same time, the subject peoples there appear to have been able to retain some of their local customs and laws. Perhaps because for so long Egypt was a self-contained society, without an empire, it came to approximate more closely the national type of collective identity and community, even if that identity was most clearly carried by its elites. Here the basic processes of self-definition, cultivation of myths, memories, symbols, and values, territorialization of attachments, dissemination of a distinctive public culture, and development of standardized laws and custom were most evident. On the other hand, some key cultural resources were lacking. The Egyptians failed to develop a myth of ethnic election – as opposed to divine favor for the Pharaoh and his dynasty; and though the elites of later periods harked back to earlier "golden ages," they failed to develop a purposive ethnohistory, or a sense of Egyptian collective destiny demanding struggle and sacrifice on the part of its members.

Judah and Judea

Just these cultural resources were slowly developed in certain periods of the ancient history of Israel – or to be more precise, of the kingdom of Judah and the later commonwealth of Judea.

Earlier, I sought to show the growth of an ethnic community in the kingdom of Judah by the late eighth or seventh century BC. Here

was a named and self-defined human community with shared ances-
try myths, elaborated historical memories, and a common Hebrew lit-
erary culture based on the centrality of the worship of Yahweh, the
Torah of Moses, and the Temple. Under strong reforming kings like
Hezekiah and Josiah, and powerful prophetic calls to purification, this
heritage encouraged among the political and religious elites a strong
ethnic consciousness, bound up with the ideal of the divine Covenant,
at a time when Assyria was menacing Judah's independence.

But can we go further and see in ancient Judah an early instance of
the national type of community, perhaps indeed the prototype of the
nation, as claimed by Adrian Hastings? It is difficult to ascertain the
degree of attachment to the territory of Judah. Certainly, it remained
the Promised Land, and some scholars argue that it was only in this
period that the land became sanctified through its occupation by a
chosen people. We have a celebrated record of just such a fervent attach-
ment, composed later, in exile "by the waters of Babylon." And in
the psalms and oracles of the prophets, we can see something of the
joy and love of the land and its features – the mountains of Carmel, the
beauty of the Sharon valley, the hills of Judea, and especially the sacred
city of Jerusalem itself, the one and only capital of Judah – of the
bounded territory, whose borders were set down in the Torah. (38)

Many scholars would also concur in the increasingly distinctive nature
of Judah's public culture. Yet, given the persistence of idol worship
in the Judean countryside, even in Josiah's days, it is likely that a strong
national consciousness, if such it was, was confined to Jerusalem and other
towns nearby. There, as we saw, the assembled people participated in
renewing the covenant of the Book of Law found in the Temple in
621 BC and in the accompanying religious reforms of Josiah. Certainly,
the king tried to extend the reach of his reforms by tearing down the
high places and idols in the countryside. In this case, the distinctive
public culture was both the Word of God and a code of Law, applic-
able to one and all. The problem was to secure its widespread obser-
vance; and here Josiah's early death in battle cut short his programme
of reform. Only in the Babylonian exile could the programme be
partly resumed, by further editing of the laws and histories of the
Pentateuch and Deuteronomic books; and only in the post-Exilic com-
munity of Jerusalem and its Temple could Ezra and Nehemiah begin
to lay the basis for a renewed and purified national community. (39)

All of which goes to support Steven Grosby's characterization of late seventh-century Judah as a "nationality" – I would say "nation" – but one that was quickly wiped out. Nevertheless, the model had caught on. Even without their own kings and under foreign rule, the Jews of Jerusalem began to build an autonomous ethnoreligious community under its own religious authorities centered on the Temple and its public culture, and harking back to a golden age of the Mosaic Covenant. The moment that circumstances opened the way for a degree of independent political activity, a new note of struggle and sacrifice for the Torah and community was introduced in the successful Maccabean revolt of 167 BC, and leaders like Simon sought to combine their military position with the religious status of high priest, through the ratification of the assembled people. In the succeeding century, we see a renewed emphasis upon the extent of the land of Israel, the efflorescence of Temple culture, supplemented by the growth of synagogues, and a wider observance of the Torah. Despite the secession of the Essenes and the conflict between Sadducees and Pharisees, the Roman occupation only strengthened the processes that encouraged the formation of a national community among the Jews in this period, with the Pharisees and the Zealot party expressing the heightened national sentiment prevalent among large numbers of the Jewish residents of Roman Palestine. (40)

Conclusion

Though any conclusion about the presence of nations in the ancient Near East can only be very tentative, it appears that, while ethnic ties and networks were widespread, only in ancient Egypt and Judah might there be enough evidence to allow us to speak of nations in antiquity. Only in these cases had the necessary social and symbolic processes become sufficiently developed to create the right conditions for these communities to approximate to the ideal type of the nation, and only at certain periods in their histories. In the Neo-Assyrian and Persian cases, on the other hand, only some of the relevant processes were operative, sufficient to encourage the emergence of self-defining *ethnies*, but not to create the conditions for nations. Moreover, when it came to the cultural resources of election myths, golden ages, and destiny through sacrifice, resources which help to maintain a sense of

national identity, these were only really well developed in the example of Judea; and this may help to account for its continuing relevance and influence over the *longue durée*.

Two further conclusions may be drawn. The first is the vital importance of politics and polities. Each of the cases considered emerged within the matrix of a political system – bureaucratic empire or patrimonial kingdom – and it was political ideology and political action that were crucial to the formation of *ethnies* and, more particularly, nations. In ancient Greece, on the other hand, the weakness of an overarching Hellenic ideology and lack of a single political framework in the face of the exclusive patriotism and solidarity of the *polis* militated against the formation of an ancient Greek nation – and *a fortiori* of a Phoenician or Sumerian nation. Hence, the centrality of political ideology and institutions in the formation of nations must be underlined.

But, by the same token, so must religious ideals and cults. While, of course, the Persians and Assyrians possessed their own cults and ideals, they either failed to unite the subject peoples round them or openly tolerated the presence of local gods and cults. Either way, religion could not act as the cement of social solidarity. In Egypt and Judea, on the other hand, religious conceptions, ethics, and rituals provided the binding elements of national consciousness and social cohesion. It is true that, in Egypt, the common people were in later periods of foreign rule distanced from the temple religion and language of the priesthoods and nobles, with the result that in the Roman period rival religions like Christianity could make massive inroads at the expense of traditional Egyptian religion, which depended on the power of the divine Pharaoh. In Judea, on the other hand, the original religion of God, Torah and Temple, married to the ideal of the Covenant with its myths of ethnic election and the Promised Land, could be continually renewed through varied reinterpretations and increasing inclusion of the populace, especially after the Maccabean revolt and the rise of the Pharisees. It was this self-renewing religion that, in the shape of all three monotheisms, was to exert so powerful an influence on the later development of nations.