

that reshape the messages of the nationalist elites. To omit the perceptions and role of non-elite strata is to miss this underlying drive of so many nationalisms and the source of their direction.

Finally, we may note that the modernist emphasis on the role of the territorial state tends to preclude an equally important role for the ethnic origins of nations. This is a large subject to which I shall return. Suffice it to say here that an overt concern with ethnic origins has shaped the ideologies of many non-Western nationalisms; ethnic motifs form an intrinsic element of the historicism of nationalist ideologies, while the model of the ethnic nation has been as potent as the success story of the Anglo-French national state. Here the strength of political modernism is also its weakness. Its exclusive concern with the political modernity of nations and nationalism precludes it from considering the influence of ethnic motifs of origin and the impact of cultural history on the appeal and success of nations and nationalism. As a result, the study of nationalism becomes truncated and shorn of much of its content.

5 Political messianism

On one matter, practically all scholars agree. As an ideology and movement, nationalism is modern. It dates from the late eighteenth or very early nineteenth centuries, and it originated in Western and Central Europe, and the United States. It is, therefore, a product of the discontents of modernity. Just as the world religions constituted a much earlier response to the predicament of humanity in agrarian societies, with their natural disasters and social cataclysms, so the nation and nationalism represent the fundamental response to the crisis of identity so many human beings faced with the onslaught of modernity on the traditions of their ancestors. Nationalism is the natural response of human beings whose social world, with its stable groupings, has collapsed; yearning to belong to a durable community, they turn to the transhistorical nation as the only available replacement for the extended family, neighbourhood and religious community, all of which have been eroded by capitalism and westernisation.

'Political religion'

This was very much the basis of the argument advanced by the theorists of 'political religion' in the 1960s. They saw nationalism in the new states of Africa and Asia as a religion of modernisation, a political version of traditional religion. These modern states, they argued, have a number of requirements: the aggregation of interests, the establishment of strong central authority, the development of economic rationality, the need for flexible institutions for coping with change. But in the new states, the needs of social integration and economic development took on special importance in view of their ethnic heterogeneity and lack of resources. To achieve social integration and development, elites had to mobilise the masses and encourage them to postpone gratification and accept considerable sacrifices. The virtues of patriotism, commitment, hard work, frugality and self-sacrifice had to be inculcated in the newly enfranchised citizens. Nationalism, as a fervent and puritan ideology of mass self-sacrifice, served the purposes of the elites of the new states admirably, for in conditions of national liberation from colonial rule it equated the unitary new nation with the newly independent state, and urged the citizens to labour for the good of the whole nation. In this way, the state, and its one-party or military regime, came to

embody the seamless unity of the nation, which was endowed with the characteristics of a faithful church. It became a pure, sinless and seamless community, to be worshipped by the citizenry in the same way as communities of believers had formerly worshipped the deity. Nationalism, in other words, substituted the nation for the deity, the citizen body for the church and the political kingdom for the kingdom of God, but in every other respect replicated the forms and qualities of traditional religions.¹

In this Durkheimian model, nationalism becomes a form of reflexive collective self-worship, a 'political religion' not just in the sense in which a religion like Islam is sometimes characterised as political, that is, as a way of life which does not distinguish between politics and religion, but as a political surrogate for religion. Nationalism here is really a modern, secular ideology which serves as a 'civil religion', performing the same functions for individuals and groups as did traditional religion, although springing from secular, non-traditional sources. Durkheim himself summed this approach up when, commenting on ideological developments in the French Revolution, he remarked that

At that time, under the influence of the general enthusiasm, things purely secular in nature were transformed by public opinion into sacred things: these were the Fatherland, Liberty, Reason. A religion tended to become established which had its dogmas, symbols, altars and feasts.

(Durkheim 1915: 214)

For Durkheim, of course, this 'religious' quality, which derives from the etymology of the term, is universal and enduring: it is to be found in different forms in all societies, even in modern, apparently quite secular industrial societies. Traditional worship of God or gods may have been superseded; but the deeper roots of religion, the need for cults to distinguish the sacred from the profane, the need to express the dependance of human beings on a powerful society, will always remain.²

This is not the standpoint of the theorists of 'political religion'. They are adherents of an ideological version of modernism. For David Apter, Lucian Pye, Leonard Binder and Manfred Halpern, these releases into 'political religion' are characteristic of the painful transition to modernity. In order to forge modern nations, elites in the new states resort to what Apter termed 'mobilisation systems', and invent a symbolic mythology and civic religion to persuade the masses to make the necessary sacrifices. Once development has been achieved, and the threshold of modernity crossed, there will be no further need of the political religion of nationalism or of the political mobilisation system built up on its basis (Pye 1962; Apter 1963b; Halpern 1963; Binder 1964; cf. Lerner 1958; Smeiser 1962; Eisenstadt 1965).

Marginal youth

This is the starting point for Élie Kedourie's analysis of the spread of nationalism to colonial societies in the long introduction to his second book, an anthology of writings of nationalists entitled *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*. This is a sequel to his earlier influential *Nationalism*. In that book, Kedourie had argued that nationalism was a doctrine invented in Europe in the early nineteenth century and that it sprang from the philosophical tradition of the Enlightenment, notably from Kant's doctrine that the good will can only be the autonomous will. It was the merit of Fichte and other German Romantics like Schlegel, Müller, Schleiermacher, Arndt and Jahn to marry Kant's individualist doctrine to Herder's cultural populism in such a way that autonomy was now predicated of pure linguistic communities, in which, to realise their true freedom, individuals must absorb themselves. To realise its autonomy, the linguistic nation must determine itself and take up its destiny; the individual's self could only be realised in the struggle of his or her nation for self-determination (Kedourie 1960: chs 4-5).

Kedourie went on to sketch a brief social explanation of why this romantic version of nationalism (which he assumed was the only true version of the doctrine) arose in Germany. Aside from Kant's influence, and the example and legend of the French Revolution with its new style of mass politics, the political and social situation in the German-speaking lands, divided as they were into many principalities of varying size and importance, denied to the emerging class of German intellectuals any influence on the direction of affairs. Excluded and alienated from politics, these intellectuals became restless under the impact of Enlightenment rationalism and sought in romantic fantasies a solution to their discontents. They eagerly latched onto the Fichtean nationalist synthesis, especially after the defeat of Prussia by Napoleon in 1806; but they were only the first of many waves of European nationalism spearheaded by alienated young intellectuals for whom the traditions of their fathers had lost all meaning. Young Italy, Young Poland, Young Hungary and the like, children's crusades against the old order, attested to a European *Zeitgeist* of revolutionary messianism that could only end in terroristic nihilism and ethnic hatred, especially in ethnically mixed areas like the Balkans (*ibid.*: ch. 6).

In the Introduction to his second book on nationalism, Kedourie extended his analysis to the colonies of Africa and Asia which had fallen prey to secular European ways and ideologies. Colonies, he argued, had not been established for the export of capital in an age of finance capital, as Hobson, Hilferding and Lenin had claimed; their economic returns were negligible compared to their strategic and psychological benefits. Not only were they territories where immigrants could find economic opportunities, they also served as imperial outposts against European rivals at a time when the landmass of Europe itself was unable to accommodate territorial expansion. These strategic considerations were abetted by the nineteenth-century imperialist desire for 'glory' in a period of colonial political annexation which for Disraeli and his generation signified the

original political meanings of the terms 'imperialism' and 'colonialism' (Kedourie 1971: 4, 8, 10-14).

Now imperialism had a number of unforeseen consequences. To begin with, colonial administration tended to pulverise traditional society and regiment the colony through its bureaucratic measures. This meant that traditional handicrafts and village production suffered; they were no match for the exports of Lancashire industries or the financial speculations of the City. Hence the economic basis of village life, which accounted for the vast mass of the population, collapsed. In addition, the colonial authorities encouraged literacy and secular education on Western lines. Mass literacy undermined traditional religious authority and customary ways, and, along with Western research into the ethnic traditions and cultures of the colonies, prepared the way for alternative conceptions and new leaderships in the African and Asian colonies. From this clash of cultures and confusion of soul, emerged a new class of 'marginal men' who embraced western ideals of independence and self-reliance, yet bore the marks of the strain and discontent of men

disaffected toward their traditional society; the nucleus and vanguard of a radical and uncompromising opposition and its battering ram pounding down outmoded and obscurantist institutions.

(Kedourie 1971: 27)

Among the many ideas that spread to African and Asian colonies, the most appealing to the marginal men was nationalism, the doctrine that

holds that humanity is naturally divided into nations, that nations are known by certain characteristics that can be ascertained, and that the only legitimate type of government is national self-government.

(*ibid.*: 28)

As a doctrine, nationalism is utterly alien to the political traditions of Asia and Africa, with their great empires and tribal kingdoms respectively; it is a product of the history of Europe, with its abiding tendency to 'require and enforce uniformity of belief among the members of a body politic' (*ibid.*: 31). From Theodosius in 379 AD through the Crusades and the Wars of Religion right up to Rousseau's 'civil religion', the drive for religious and cultural homogeneity in a polity has reappeared regularly in Europe. This tendency has been reinforced, and given its concrete modern expression, by two additional, if more recent, features of European thought and practice: the elevation of cultural, and especially linguistic, group diversity by the German Romantics, and the profound European preoccupation with history and evolutionary development as the basis for personal and collective identity, which became widespread during the period of the Enlightenment and romanticism (*ibid.*: 34-6).³

The cult of the 'dark gods'

What impact did these new European ideas have on Asian and African societies? Kedourie takes as his prototype the early expression of Greek nationalism in the person of Adamantios Korais (1748-1833), the Greek enlightener and native of the Greek Orthodox community of Smyrna. Korais had imbibed Western ideas and languages under the auspices of a Dutch clergyman, and stayed several years during the 1770s in Holland: after returning for a brief sojourn in his homeland, he spent the rest of his life in France. Here, under the influence of the growing radicalism of the French Revolution, Korais began to reinterpret the condition of his native Greece in Western terms, lamenting its decline and expressing (in a lecture of 1803) 'the customary appeal to a glorious past, earnest of a still more glorious future, and warrant for the subversion of present and existing institutions'. In his conclusion, Korais emphasised that modern Greeks are the descendants of the ancient Greeks, and as such must be worthy of them; only by accepting this, would the regeneration of Greece become possible (*ibid.*: 42-3).

For Elie Kedourie, love of the ancient past feeds on hatred of the present. Quoting Yeats' 'More substance in our enmities than our love', Kedourie emphasises the European Enlightenment roots of the non-Western intellectuals' antagonism towards all existing traditional institutions, notably religious orthodoxies, in the Balkans and in Asia. The same European metamorphosis of beliefs and assumptions invaded the Ottoman Empire, which, from being 'the work of the House of Osman laboring in the triumphal cause of Islam', became 'an achievement of the Turkish, or more generally the Turanian, genius', both 'Turk' and 'Turanian' being nineteenth-century European philological and historical inventions. In fact, the name 'Turkey' was given to the land of the Turks by the Kemalist regime in the 1920s; there was no name for this idea in the Turkish language. For the foremost Turkish theorist of nationalism, Ziya Gökalp, indeed,

The country of the Turks is not Turkey, nor yet Turkestan. Their country is a broad and everlasting land – Turan.

a term that could cover Sumerians and Hittites, not to mention Attila, Genghis Khan and Tamerlane, as 'manifestations of the protean genius of Turan'. Later, however, the Turks ceased to be 'Turaniens'; for Tekin Alp in the 1930s they had become beautiful, tall specimens of the 'Aryan race', in line with the new interest in racial and fascist doctrines (*ibid.*: 48-52).

In Iran, Pakistan, India and Africa, Kedourie finds the identical processes of Europeanisation of thought and the same transvaluation of values. In the past, the Buddha, Confucius, Muhammad and Isaiah were teachers and prophets whose teachings

lighted men on their way, a rule of life unvarying and stable, which gave meaning and coherence to the world, a living, self-confident, self-contained tradition: they were not symbols and proofs of national greatness.

(*ibid.*: 64-5)

Now their role is purely instrumental, to provide an example and harbinger of the 'national' genius; thus Arab nationalism has 'transformed Muhammad from a prophet and lawgiver into a mere harbinger of Arabism'. In order to transform the 'heap of loose sand' which is all that is left of a traditional society pulverised by Europe into something 'solid and powerful', it is necessary to arouse a sense of national identity, appeal to the ethnic past and 'restore' traditional morality as the cement of national solidarity. Indeed, the tendency of nationalism to assimilate traditional religion shows that it is not simply a cognitive doctrine; it is also a 'method of spiritual mobilisation, of eliciting, activating, and canalising dormant political energies' (*ibid.*: 70).⁴

Good examples of this political activism are provided by Tilak's instrumental use of the Hindu revival in Marathi festivals such as the worship of the elephant-god Ganesha or the chieftain Shivaji's birthday, or his political reinterpretation of the stoic spiritual teachings of Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. For Bipin Chandra Pal, too, popular Hinduism, being partly spiritual and partly social, could easily and naturally furnish the basis for a civil religion of India, through the politicisation of what were originally purely religious ideas. Thus the worship of the dark goddess Kali, with her garland of human heads round her neck, dripping blood, before whom initiates of terrorist societies took their vows, could be made to serve nationalist political ends, simply by substituting a sacrifice of 108 white, rather than black, goats at each new moon – that is, 108 whites (*ibid.*: 70-76; cf. Adenwalla 1961; Kapferer 1988: ch. 3).

If this was the effect of the introduction of nationalist activism on Indian and indeed on all non-European societies, how did it come about that this style of politics and this doctrine became the dominant form of politics outside Europe? Kedourie argues that, although there were well known resistance movements to European incursions in the mid-nineteenth century, such as the Indian Mutiny, the novel pattern of European rule began to attract the new educated classes who had come to accept the superiority of European civilisation. Indeed, they fervently desired to remake their own societies in the likeness of Europe. Unfortunately, they soon found that, despite their Western education and their assimilation into Western ways, they were not accepted on an equal footing with their European counterparts. This was especially true of access to European imperial institutions. Here Kedourie cites the example of European anger at and emasculation of the Ilbert Bill of 1883, which proposed to allow Indian-born magistrates the same rights to try British subjects in India as British-born colleagues, and the ensuing Indian resentment. There was also the influential case of Surendranath Banerjee (1848-1926) who was dismissed from the British civil service for a lesser offence, travelled to London for a fair hearing but was refused reinstatement, and launched in consequence a nationalist lecture

campaign, persuaded as he was that 'the personal wrong done to me was an illustration of the impotency of our people' (*ibid.*: 84-5).

Similar slights, frustrations and rejections by the higher echelons of the civil service were experienced by Western-educated Arabs like Edward Atiyah and George Antonius, and they once again revealed the profound gulf between imperial pretensions to impartiality and fairness and imperial practices of racial discrimination. But these illiberal rejections raised a more profound question of identity, of 'What am I?', in the shocked and anguished souls of the marginal men. Their reply was a strident assertion of self in a collective mode unknown to their forbears, and, in revulsion against Europe and its bloody internecine wars, an appeal to the 'dark gods' of ethnic tradition (*ibid.*: 86-9, 91-2).

A millennial opiate

Or was it revulsion? Perhaps, argues Kedourie, the appeal to the dark gods and their rites was really an imitation and adaptation of European ideas, not only the idea that every nation must have a past, preferably heroic and glorious, but also the previously hidden but now manifest European tradition of progress of which the idea that the nation must have a great and splendid future is one variant.

Now the idea that history, in the words of the German enlightener Lessing, is 'a road on which humanity progresses towards perfection' and that 'It will certainly come, the era of a new, everlasting gospel which is the New Covenant', can be traced back, as Lessing himself was aware, to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Europe. The term 'everlasting gospel' figured in the title of a work published in Paris in 1254 by Gerard of Borgo San Donnino, who was in turn inspired by the writings of a Calabrian abbot, Joachim of Fiore (c. 1130-1202). Joachim speculated about the imminent advent of the millennium, basing himself on apocalyptic texts in the Book of Revelations such as:

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

(*ibid.*: 94-5, citing Revelations 20: 6)

Joachim speculated that the age of law (the Father) had been followed by the age of grace (the Son) and that this would now give way to an age of love (the Holy Spirit), the 'new heaven and new earth' of the prophecies of St John the Divine. Despite repeated condemnations by church authorities (as well as by rabbis and ulama), such antinomian, millennial heresies reappeared from time to time, wreaking havoc and destruction, as in the terrifying rising of 1534 among the Anabaptists of Münster, or outside Europe in the Taiping rebellion of 1850-61 in southern China.

In all these examples, the political style of millennialism is clear:

The millennial hope is of the inauguration and institution of a totally new order where love reigns and all men are brothers, where all distinctions and divisions, all selfishness and self-regard are abolished. But a society in which the distinction between public and private is annihilated, in which ranks, orders, classes, associations and families are all dissolved into one big family, a society in which all articulations and complexities have disappeared – such a society becomes helpless in the hands of those who prophesy the good tidings of the coming salvation.

(*ibid.*: 97)

Hence the revolutionary aims and style of the politics of millennial nationalism:

All of them [millennialisms] announce the gospel of love and brotherhood, and they must therefore destroy all social and political institutions: they must, as Tseng Kuo-fan put it, 'depose sovereigns and degrade officials'.

(*ibid.*: 102)

Since the French Revolution, millennialism has re-emerged in secular garb, as the ideal of progress and the quest for absolute liberty which, as Hegel observed, goes hand-in-hand with terror. The idea of progress is a 'secularised and respectable version of the medieval millennium'. Its disreputable political style, *sans-culotisme*, has been placed in the service of a secular politics of the impossible, a frenzied meliorism in which, as Robespierre declared, terror is the emanation of virtue.

Nationalism as it appears and spreads in Europe is one of the many forms of this vision of a purified society in which all things are made new... What gives the doctrine dynamism, what makes it a mainspring of human action is surely this millennial hope that men can somehow put an end to all oppression and injustice.

(*ibid.*: 103–5)

Citing the *Revolutionary Catechism* (1869) of the anarchist Bakunin, written under the influence of the terrorist Nechaev, to reveal the revolutionary political style of the quest for absolute liberty, Kedourie argues that the cult of the dark gods by educated non-Europeans represents the adoption and adaptation of certain revolutionary and terrorist features of the European tradition. The glorification of Kali, goddess of destruction, is the counterpart of Bakunin's regrouping of 'this world of brigands into an invincible and omni-destructive force' and Robespierre's conjunction of virtue and terror. This leads Elie Kedourie to conclude that:

We may say in short that the mainspring of nationalism in Asia and Africa is the same secular millennialism which had its rise and development in Europe and in which society is subjected to the will of a handful of vision-

aries who, to achieve their vision, must destroy all barriers between private and public.

(*ibid.*: 106)

Kedourie goes on to illustrate his thesis of the politics of the impossible, leading to what the poet Rimbaud called 'the systematic *dérangement* of the senses', with examples taken from India, Ghana, Kenya, the Congo and southern Africa.

Mao Mao, Ethiopianism, the cult of Black messiahs, and the popularity of millenarian varieties of Christianity alike testify to the disturbance and disorientation which contact with Europe brought and which practices and beliefs of this kind promised to assuage and relieve.

(*ibid.*: 127)

From this disorientation and the religious fervour which it breeds, the nationalist movement can fashion a formidable weapon, provided it can be channelled and focused onto a few slogans and symbols. Of these symbols, the national leader is often the most potent, as Kenyatta, Nkrumah and Néturu discovered. For the emotional link between leaders and led, which satisfies the leader's will to power, fosters the 'pathetic fallacy', namely, that

there is no difference between them and those whom they rule, that their interests, their preoccupations and their aims are exactly identical.

(*ibid.*: 131)

This makes the political tie a 'private, amorous relation, in which the body politic is united by love'; indeed for Michel Allaq, the ideologue of the Syrian Ba'ath Party, nationalism is love. But government, Kedourie reminds us, is the exercise of power and the governors must be kept apart from the governed; they must not 'feel with the people', for they are not flesh of their flesh. Nationalists, on the other hand, 'feel with the people'. Their despotisms are driven by a tender merclessness which aims to bring their countrymen back to their true selves, if necessary through terror and death. Hence the celebration of violence by Fanon and the nationalisation of the proletarian struggle by Sultan Galiev, for whom the class struggle becomes a conflict between the white and the coloured races.⁵

In the final analysis, these are all variations on the underlying theme of the virtue of the poor, the guilt of Europe and the innocence of Asia and Africa, salvation through violence and the coming reign of universal love. 'Theory' has indeed become the opium of the masses. But Marx was wrong: opium is no mere soporific.

As the Old man of the Mountain whose 'theory' was so potent that legend has transmuted it into *hashish* could have told him, the drug may also excite its addicts to a frenzy of destruction.

(*ibid.*: 147)

Colonialism and the intellectuals

The idea that nationalism is a product of 'marginal men' or uprooted intellectuals caught between tradition and westernisation is not an original one. It can be found in an early essay by Trevor-Roper, as well as in the works of Thomas Hodgkin, and it owes much to Hans Kohn's characterisation of an organic 'Eastern' nationalism led by tiny coteries of intellectuals in place of a bourgeoisie. But in Elie Kedourie's hands, this thesis is charged with a new emotion and a deeper meaning. Kedourie makes three claims: first, that the discrepancy between imperial ideals and colonial practices inevitably breeds the discontent of wasted merit among the intellectuals; second, that the ensuing crisis of identity can only be assuaged by a (false because impossible) millennial doctrine of collective political progress; and third, that the violence we so often associate with nationalism is the product of its 'transvaluation of values' and its appeal to mass emotion through the politicisation of ethnic religion. His penetrating exploration and rich illustration of these arguments gives Kedourie's analysis a singular power and originality, and makes it the most compelling statement of ideological modernism (Kohn 1967a: ch. 7; Trevor-Roper 1962; Hodgkin 1956, 1964).

Two considerations frame Kedourie's arguments. The first is that his theoretical claims are limited. Unlike Gellner, Naim or Hechter, Kedourie rejects the idea that he aims to offer any kind of theory; indeed, he argues that such theoretical understanding is impossible and undesirable. The specificity of history and variety of human responses renders any overall theory pointless and misleading. All we can hope to do is to understand a particular doctrine or movement in its context, as an expression of a particular *Zeitgeist*: all the historian is concerned with are the ways in which specific ideas and practices emerge and are developed in a particular social and cultural milieu. The milieu in which Kedourie locates the birth of nationalism is, first, an early nineteenth-century Central Europe undergoing revolutionary social and political change, and second, a late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Asia and Africa radically transformed by the impact of European colonialism. Common to both is the solvent of cultural westernisation and social modernisation, which undermines traditional communities and breaks the age-old transmission of political habits and ideas (see S. Kedourie 1990).

The second consideration is normative. Kedourie is violently hostile to all expressions of nationalism, as he regards the doctrine as not only intellectually incoherent and erroneous, but also morally pernicious and destructive of all political order. For Kedourie, nationalism is a particularly virulent, because self-destructive, species of the more general Western ideal of progress; its violence stems from its frenzied attempts to realise unattainable ideals in an imperfect world. Worse, nationalists are guilty of the sin of pride. Taking off from the assumptions of their intellectual progenitors, the Cartesian rationalist philosophers from Descartes to Kant, they add a pitiless impiety to their overweening arrogance by seeking moral perfection in an imperfect world. These ruthless but

self-deluded would-be gods inevitably wreak havoc on themselves and their peoples, and destroy all hope of peace and a stable international order (see also Dunn 1978: ch. 3; Viroli 1995).

Despite these claims, Kedourie succeeds in offering a general framework for the understanding of nationalism which, at certain points, even manages to evince a degree of sympathy with those who embrace nationalism. That overall framework is the diffusion of ideas under the impact of a discriminatory colonialism. Kedourie sees nationalism as a disease transmitted through travel and reading from its sources in the West; yet he acknowledges that intellectuals may all too easily succumb to the disease because of the unenviable position in which they find themselves. With many an incisive example, Kedourie illustrates their predicament: their fervent embrace of an apparently superior civilisation with its ideals of impersonal merit and impartial justice; their subsequent bitter disappointment on finding themselves excluded both in the metropolis and at home; their tendency to see in their individual rejection the impotency of their people to which racial discrimination in the imperial bureaucracy lends credence; their ensuing self-doubt and identity crisis; and their search for a political solution to their alienation. This tendency to exclude the meritorious Western-educated non-Europeans from the higher echelons of the colonial bureaucracy is well documented, as is the accompanying self-doubt and ambivalence of the intellectuals; indeed, these same intellectuals and professionals can experience similar frustrations in the West itself, for example, in Quebec, where they are in the forefront of Québécois nationalism (Pinard and Hamilton 1981; cf. Wallerstein 1965; Crowder 1968; Gouldner 1979; A. D. Smith 1981a: ch. 6).

But is this diffusionist framework helpful in accounting for the rise of nationalism in Africa and Asia? Diffusionism in itself is always theoretically inadequate; it can never account for the *reception* of ideas that are transmitted from one centre to another. We may accept the Western origins of nationalist ideas, but is that in itself sufficient to explain the emergence, let alone the content, of nationalism in a given colony or state outside Europe? Can we derive the rise of an Arab or Indian nationalist movement from the political self-assertion of a few intellectuals whose discontents have found a political outlet in the idea of an Arab or Indian nation? Granted that intellectuals are necessary to such movements, at least in their inception, are the latter mere products of their ambivalence and discontent, and is their nationalist thought always merely derivative? (see Chatterjee 1986).

The general picture that Kedourie paints is one in which traditional societies are pulverised and regimented by colonial modernity, leaving the intellectuals as the only social group able to respond to the onslaught. On the other hand, Kedourie admits the persistence of traditional elements, when he analyses the ways in which these intellectuals seek to manipulate the atavistic emotions of the masses and to use or revive their traditional practices. In fact, as we know, colonialism's impact was highly variable. For one thing, it very much depended on the nature and policies of the colonial power. Where the French, for example, tended to assimilate an African or Indo-Chinese elite, leaving the rest of the

population uneducated and second-class citizens, the British colonial authorities preferred a policy of 'indirect rule', working with and through traditional but subordinated indigenous authorities. We also have to take into account the variable presence of missionaries and the impact of missionary education in uprooting indigenous beliefs and customs. These are only some of the reasons why many traditional elements – ways of life, customs, beliefs, symbols, myths – persisted in varying degrees in Asia and Africa, even after decades of colonial rule (Crowder 1968; Markovitz 1977; cf. Horowitz 1983).

Now, the important point about colonial rule is that it provided, *in relation to pre-colonial cultures and social structures*, the crucible in which nationalist movements emerged. In other words, the genesis and development of nationalism in, say, Nigeria, Kenya and India must be located, not simply in the diffusion of Western ideas through conspiratorial cells of restless indigenous intellectuals who have returned empty-handed from the West, but in the interests, sentiments and aspirations of a variety of social and cultural groups in colonial India, Kenya and Nigeria. These social and cultural groups are partly formed by the activities of colonial officials, traders and missionaries, but they are also derived from pre-colonial ethnic communities and polities, and from traditional social strata like chieftains and traders, tribal castes and Brahmins, which have taken on a new life in the colonial setting. We cannot understand the specific nature of Indian, Kenyan or Nigerian nationalisms without taking into account the cultures and traditions of these communities and strata. Kedourie indirectly admits this, but sees the process as one-sided, a manipulation of the inert masses by messianic elites; whereas, in fact, the cultural resources and ethnic outlooks of peasants and traders, tribesmen and lower castes, also helped to shape the particular versions of nationalism that emerged in these colonies.⁶

The failure to treat seriously the social and cultural conditions in which nationalism emerges in Africa and Asia stems not only from Kedourie's diffusionism, but also from his psychologism. In fact, his overestimation of the power of ideas is closely linked to his belief in the universal need of human beings to belong to a stable community. It follows that, if such communities are undermined, human beings must immediately look for alternative sources of collective stability. At this point, the nation appears, like some *deus ex machina*, to fill the gap and assuage the pain of their disorientation. A new idea gives birth to a new type of community at the very moment when the old ideas of religion and the traditional forms of community are undermined.

But all this assumes, first, that human beings must belong to stable communities, and second that the nation is indeed a wholly new kind of community and has no links with traditional communities. Now, it may be true that many human beings prefer to live their lives in stable communities, though, given the variety of such groups in the modern world, their collective identities are likely to be multiple and cross-cutting. But it should not be inferred from this that all human beings always prefer stability to change, and tradition to the ability to join or even form their own communities of choice. This is as much a generalisation open to challenge as the nationalist idea that all human beings desire to free

themselves from oppression, which Kedourie correctly refutes. Once again, the context is all-important. In some circumstances, human beings may wish to rid themselves of stable but oppressive communities, in others to restore a measure of communal stability even at the cost of curtailing their freedom of choice. In following the conservative tradition of Lord Acton and Michael Oakeshott, Kedourie adopted a rather one-dimensional psychologism that bypasses the social and cultural settings which contribute to the variety of human responses to rapid change in the modern world, and prevents him from seeing how in the contemporary world, many more human beings are experimenting with different forms of social network and cultural community (see Melucci 1989).

Second, even if 'nationalism-in-general' is a modern ideology, it does not follow that nations are themselves wholly novel kinds of community. In fact, as we shall see, this view needs to be seriously qualified. For the moment, it suffices to demonstrate the lack of solid argument or evidence in Kedourie's formulation of the link between the 'need to belong' and the appearance of the nation. Let us concede such a universal need. Why must it fasten on 'the nation'? Why not on 'class', 'city', 'region', indeed 'continent'? Why not just 'the state'? Given these alternatives, we are hardly justified in choosing the nation, simply because of the lucubrations of a few German intellectuals and their followers. In other words, Kedourie's idealist and psychologist methodology precludes him from explaining why it was, and is, the nation that has won out over all these rivals, and why nationalism has become the dominant ideology and culture of our time.

This failure is linked to Elie Kedourie's unique combination of radical socio-historical modernism with a normative anti-modernism. The nation, along with nationalism, is seen as a new-fangled type of community, a construct of disaffected intellectuals, without any precursor or foundation in pre-modern epochs. It is a brutal imposition of the West on innocent cultures and societies. Forced to eat of this tree of knowledge and driven out of their pre-colonial Eden, Africans and Asians have become prey to the lure of the laterday opiate of unattainable perfectibility, which removes them yet further from the ways of life that had served them so well, and bars their return to the warmth and intimacy of family and tradition.

Millennialism and progress

Kedourie traces this modern opiate of messianic secular nationalism to a specific source, medieval Christian and European millennial heresies. The argument proceeds in two ways: by analogy and by filiation. Kedourie seeks to trace first the historical route by which these medieval heresies became by the late eighteenth century the basis for secular nationalism. This route is necessarily obscure, since the heresies were suppressed and often left no records. But Kedourie manages to reconstruct some passages along the way. A view of the last stage is afforded by some paragraphs of Lessing's *Education of the Human Race* (1780) which, in prophetic bursts, proclaims the coming of 'this epoch of perfection' and traces the origin of this 'everlasting gospel' of perfection to 'certain

visionaries of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries'. Of course, as Kedourie readily concedes, this was simply a more lyrical and fervent expression of the enlightened meliorism of the Enlightenment, of which Kedourie quotes an orthodox example from an English theological work of 1773 by William Worthington, which also foresaw a future approximation to 'the innocence and perfection of the paradisaical state' (Kedourie 1971: 91-7).

Now, we may readily concede some influence on eighteenth-century meliorism from earlier expressions of religious messianism. But it is far more difficult to trace a clear provenance from the medieval apocalyptic millennialism of Joachim of Fiore in the late twelfth century and Gerard of Borgo San Donnino in the thirteenth century to Lessing's outpourings and Mazzini's rhetoric in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the long intervening period, Kedourie cites only the drama of the Anabaptist rising in Münster under Jan Mathys and Jan of Leyden. Can we seriously trace the origins of German, or indeed any nationalism to the apocalyptic visions of the Franciscan Spirituals, the Brethren of the Free Spirit and the Anabaptists of Münster from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries? For Kedourie's filiation thesis to hold, we would need to show that every case of nationalism, at least in Europe, was preceded by a millennial movement with strong chiliastic expectations. It may be possible to show that a few nationalisms were preceded, within a few decades, by a millennial movement – the Taiping Movement in China springs to mind – but there are many more cases where no such chronological succession of millennial and nationalist movements can be discovered. Of course, Kedourie's claim is more limited; merely to have shown a general trend, a dread of heretical ideas, that re-emerged in the late eighteenth century. Yet so many strands went into the making of eighteenth-century meliorism; why give this particular one such importance?

The answer lies in the second, analogical, mode of argument. For Kedourie, nationalism is a species of the revolutionary doctrine of progress, which in turn is a modern analogue of medieval Christian millennialism. Nationalism, therefore, like millennialism, seeks to abolish the distinction between the private and public domains; nationalism, like millennialism, seeks to institute a new morality of absolute purity and brotherhood; nationalism separates its devotees in the movement from the crowd much as millennialism elevates its virtuous elect; and, like millennialism, nationalism renounces earthly pleasures to achieve through struggle its goal of justice on earth. Both are revolutionary rather than reformist doctrines, and both seek a radical break with a corrupt and oppressive past.

Now it is certainly true that nationalism often displays messianic tendencies and seeks the overthrow of particular regimes. But its revolutionary messianism is frequently limited and circumscribed. Nationalists are not seeking to abolish this world and establish the kingdom of God on earth. They are relatively optimistic about this world, but profoundly unhappy with their place in it, or rather their lack of it. Their concerns are relatively local; they aim to rectify a particular anomaly. Admittedly, it is a serious anomaly in their eyes and causes them grievous pain; but it is not one that requires, in Isaiah's words, 'a new heaven and

a new earth', only a return to the earth's 'natural state' of autonomous nations. The typical follower of millennial heresies seeks to rid the earth of all corruption; the typical adherent of nationalism seeks only to rid his country of corrupt, because alien, rulers (see Cohen 1957; Burridge 1969, 8).

Nor is it clear that nationalists are intent on destroying all barriers between the private and public domain and instituting a new morality of absolute purity. There have been puritanical nationalisms like the French Jacobin or perhaps the Black 'Nation of Islam' movements, which have enjoined on their followers zeal, self-sacrifice, abstinence and self-discipline. But even they have not sought to abolish entirely the private domain. Most nationalisms encourage the puritanical virtues of heroic self-reliance, simplicity, fraternity and discipline in an effort to create the 'new man' and 'new woman', but they also extol family values, prize community and harness religious fervour for their ends. Most nationalisms, once in power, have made use of or re-established status hierarchies and institutions, and have turned their energies to this-worldly projects of 'nation-building'.⁹

Above everything else, nationalisms seek 'auto-emanicipation': the self-reliant individual choosing his or her destiny, and the autonomous community determining its own fate without external interference. Nationalism embraces this world, but seeks to reform it in accordance with its own vision of regeneration. This is in stark contrast to the ethos of millennialism, which seeks to escape from and abolish a corrupt world and establish an entirely new order of purity, love and justice. Nationalists may desire purity and proclaim love as their goal, but it is a love that is designed to cement the members of the nation, and a purity that seeks to reappropriate its authentic nature. The love and purity that nationalists seek is this-worldly, a social solidarity, or fraternity, which underpins a world of national states, rendering them peaceful and united.¹⁰

By concentrating on the most extreme statements and practices of certain nationalists, Kedourie has been able to suggest the close affinity between nationalism and medieval millennialism and tar them both with the brush of antinomianism heterodoxy and chiliastic fanaticism. But most nationalists are none of these things; they are perfectly ordinary bourgeois, lower-middle or working-class men and women seeking an escape from immediate oppression and injustice. Kedourie indeed concedes that this is what animates the great majority of the followers of nationalist movements; but he claims that an élite of fanatical intellectuals uses these quite ordinary grievances of the majority for their own more sinister or wilful ends. This suggests once again the selective picture of an élite of alienated intellectuals pursuing chimerical dreams, cut off from the everyday needs and aspirations of the vast mass of their compatriots, whom they manipulate through the 'pathetic fallacy' of collective empathy. This in turn presupposes a vast gulf between active élites and inert masses unbridged by any social strata or cultural values and institutions, which we saw was rarely the case even after the advent of colonialism. But this simply compounds the errors of the state-centred versions of political modernism explored in the last chapter, which are then magnified by treating the modern followers of nationalism as analogues of the adherents of millennialism. But ...

elsewhere, the social constituencies of millennialism and nationalism are quite different. Millennialism appealed to the least educated, the poorest, most peripheral and most downtrodden strata, whereas more ambitious, educated, urban classes formed the backbone of most nationalist movements, even when they sought to draw other strata, lower down the social scale, into the movement (A. D. Smith 1979: ch. 2).

It is noteworthy that the French Revolution figures only as a legend and an example in Kedourie's analysis, despite the fact that, already in 1789, let alone 1792, French nationalism was the first fully fledged example of secular nationalism in Europe, and that it directly evoked nationalist responses wherever the Revolutionary and Napoleonic armies penetrated. This means that, both ideologically and socially, the 'progressive' urban bourgeoisie is excluded from the picture, to be replaced by the authoritarian, organic and millennial nationalism of Central and East European intellectuals, as Hans Kohn had already proposed. But it is not only in France that the educated urban classes, including the bourgeoisie, took up the nationalist cause. We find them in the vanguard of the movement in places as far removed from each other as Greece and Italy, Japan and India, Mexico and the Gold Coast. Nor is the movement they espouse in the least bit apocalyptic or antinomian, even if it often centres on a messianic leader. On the contrary, it is firmly grounded in the realities of the present situation, even when it seeks to change them for the better. In this respect, most nationalisms conform much more closely to what Kedourie calls the British 'Whig doctrine of nationality' of which he approves, than to the 'Continental' unitary doctrine of nationalism, which he so heartily detests (Shafer 1938; Kedourie 1960: ch. 7; Kohn 1967a: ch. 7; Gildea 1991: ch. 3).

So neither at the sociological nor at the ideological level, can nationalism be compared with, or derived from, millennialism, whether of the medieval or of more recent varieties. They belong to different worlds of thought and action, and are divided not just by 'modernity' but, more radically, by the particularism of ethnic history, culture and territory.

The religion of history

Millennialism seeks to abolish the past, and replace it wholly by the future. Nationalism, in contrast, seeks to fashion a future in the image of the past. Not any past, of course; only an authentic past, the genuine past of a people in its homeland. It is this past that must be rediscovered and resurrected to provide a blueprint of the community's destiny; for only through a real understanding of the ethnic past can national regeneration succeed.

Now, for Elie Kedourie, the past is mainly a cultural resource to be politicised so as to mobilise and manipulate the sentiments of the masses. The cult of the 'dark gods' likewise functions as an instrument of mobilisation and activation. In this respect, Kedourie differs from other modernists. They see religion and history as, at best, quarries from which various cultural elements can be appropriated to give legitimacy to, or emotional support for, radical social change.

There is, in this view, something optional about the nationalist attitude to the past. For Kedourie, on the other hand, nationalist mobilisation and manipulation of the masses can only succeed if history and religion are taken seriously and their emotions politicised and harnessed to the national cause. The elites have no option. They are constrained by pre-existing mass cultures and especially religions. To some extent this qualifies Kedourie's modernism. Even if the nation is modern and perhaps 'invented', it does not, cannot, emerge out of nothing. Kedourie may underline the historical novelty of such modern 'nations' as Egypt and Greece, yet he has to concede their basis in the older religious traditions of Islam and Orthodoxy. Instead, he argues that these purely religious traditions have been perverted by being politicised and their values 'transvalued', while the masses have been seduced by millennial promises couched in the language and liturgies of their religious traditions.¹¹

This, then, is Kedourie's answer to the problem of 'popular resonance' which all theories of 'elite manipulation' face. How is it that the elites manage to persuade 'the masses' to embrace their ideas and heed their call to action? Through propaganda and control over education, elites have frequently manipulated the masses, often quite successfully in the short term. But the long-term success of their endeavours is always in doubt, and so nationalists have often thought it better to build on the traditions and sentiments of the majority, and, as Naim argued, use those motifs and symbols that have popular resonance. Now, for Kedourie, it is the symbols and rites of traditional religion that resonate with the masses. To mobilise the people, elites must therefore harness the collective emotions roused by traditional religions. That is why they appeal to indigenous beliefs and practices, invoke the dark gods and their rites, and transform purely religious motifs and figures into political and national symbols and heroes – which is all part of the 'ethnisation' and nationalisation of previously universal and transhistorical religions (Naim 1977: ch. 2; cf. Brass 1991: ch. 2).

I find this one of the more interesting and convincing parts of Kedourie's thesis. In so many non-Western nationalisms, religion plays and has played a critical role in the life of the vast mass of the population, and as a result the nationalist 'transvaluation' and politicisation of its values has been profoundly significant for the mobilisation of the people and the character of the subsequent nationalism. Of course, Kedourie sometimes exaggerates the contrast between purely religious and purely national motifs and symbols: for many Zionists and Pan-Arabists, Moses and Muhammad have retained their religious significance, while acquiring new political relevance as embodiments of the 'national genius'. Nevertheless, insofar as nationalism is a modern and a secular doctrine – and this is Kedourie's point of departure – its attitude to religious figures like Moses and Muhammad and to religious festivals like Passover is quite different from, and shows scant respect for, the traditional religious understanding (see A. D. Smith 1973c).¹²

But is Kedourie right in seeing in nationalism a purely modern and secular doctrine and movement? For all his assertions, even he thinks this is only part of the story; after all, nationalism is also the secular heir of a religious millennialism.

For a number of other theorists, too, religion continues to be directly relevant to nationalism. Mark Juergensmeyer, for example, distinguishes between the revival of religious nationalisms and the secular statist nationalism of the West. The latter has attempted to reconstitute the nation as a secular and liberal creation of the modern state. This is a project that religious nationalists passionately reject. They denounce the rampant materialism, alienation and corruption of Western society and its secular nationalism, and wish to wrest the nation back from the secular modern state to its 'genuine' spiritual and religious roots. Secular nationalism has failed the people and corroded the nation; it has encouraged greed, vice and corruption; it must be opposed in the name of a higher, purer conception of the nation. Hence it is not nationalism as such, but rather the Western, materialist and secular conceptions of the nation that have proved so disastrous in their consequences. Juergensmeyer sees a new cold war emerging, replacing the old one between the Western and Soviet ideological blocs, with one between a secular, liberal West and a chain of revivalist, even fundamentalist, religious movements stretching from the Protestant revival in America to the Shi'ite revolution in Iran, and from the Sunni revival in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan to the Hindu revival in India and the Buddhist renaissance in Sri Lanka (Juergensmeyer 1993; cf. Chatterjee 1986).¹³

For Bruce Kapferer, too, there are close links between religion and nationalism. He examines two very different societies and religious settings, Sri Lanka and Australia, showing how in both, nationalism itself takes on the role of a religion whose beliefs and rites address the central ontological problems and supply meaning and purpose to individuals and nations. This religion of the nation may, of course, ally itself with traditional religion and thereby reinforce it. This is what has happened in Sinhalese Sri Lanka: traditional Sinhalese Buddhism has been politicised and its rituals have taken on new and violent meanings in the context of inter-ethnic warfare. The speeches and actions of contemporary Sinhalese leaders are full of allusions and analogies with the Buddhist doctrines and the Buddhist Sinhalese past; ancient wars with Tamils interpreted, and are interpreted, in the light of the current Sri Lankan conflict (Kapferer 1988: chs 2-4; Roberts 1993; Subaratnam 1997).

In Australia, in contrast, the religion of the nation replaces traditional religions. Christian or other, while taking over much of their rites and symbols. Thus Kapferer analyses the imagery and symbolism of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, built to commemorate the egalitarian ideals and self-sacrifice of the ANZAC soldiers in the disastrous Gallipoli campaign of 1915, seeing in it a national shrine which sacralises the secular by using Christian models for the building, the stained glass windows and the rites of ANZAC Day. By emphasising themes of suffering, death, sacrifice and rebirth, a pragmatic, secular Australian nationalism is framed by religious forms, and provides an interesting variant on the 'secular religion' of Western nationalisms (Kapferer 1988: chs 5-6).¹⁴

In both these cases, as in the religious nationalisms that Juergensmeyer describes, the past plays a vital role, linking the sacred to the secular. It may, of

course, be a recent past, as in the Australian case. But it is always about authenticity, continuity, identity, dignity and destiny; the essential themes and motifs of the nationalist drama of salvation for the community as it moves forward through time. The past is as necessary to the nationalist mythology as is the future, and the 'golden age' is as relevant as the nation's glorious destiny. So nationalism must always connect its vision to the nation's past, that is, to the collective memories of the people. The past is not some neutral terrain to be explored and dissected; it is the locus of *exemplar virtues*, of the sacred, of the ancestral homeland, of the golden age, and of communal authenticity and identity. The past embodies the peculiar values and traditions of the community, without which there could be no nation and no national destiny. For nationalism, these are the sacred elements of the national spirit, which must be preserved and revitalised.¹⁵

In this sense, then, nationalism becomes the 'religion of history', sacralising the authentic past of the community in its ancestral homeland. Elie Kedourie was right to point out the way in which nationalists have used history selectively, viewing it through a special political lens. But this is not to say that the present entirely shapes the past, that immediate preoccupations and current intellectual fashions determine our view of the past. They do, of course, suggest some of the questions we ask of the past. Other questions may be raised by tradition and upbringing. Here the past, reinforced by the panoply of institutions, mores and symbols we have inherited from previous generations, shapes our understanding of the present. The idea that nationalist or other intellectuals can entirely break asunder these bands of the past sits strangely with Kedourie's overall religious conservatism, and suggests that he has greatly overestimated the political role and the autonomy from society of these Europeanised intellectuals.

That the intellectuals are freed from social constraints is, of course, a prerequisite for a psychological and diffusionist theory of 'political religion', one whose mainpring is anomie and alienation. This parallels Liah Greenfield's emphasis on the alienation and discontent of significant strata, and particularly the *resonance* of segments of the upper classes whose status and career prospects are blocked, as occurred with certain orders of the French aristocracy. But Greenfield does not remove the alienated from social and political constraints, even if, like Kedourie, she does not fully explain the origin and nature of the ideal of the nation to which the thwarted and alienated turn. This means that she ties ideology much more firmly to status group interests, and thereby shows us the variations and parameters of the ideologies espoused. In contrast, Kedourie wants to convince us of the evil that nationalism represents. He does so by showing how restless, alienated intellectuals operating in a social and political vacuum are driven by unbridled nationalist ideology to violence and terror, and how unattainable but godless virtue in an era of revolutionary change leads ineluctably to mass destruction. Concentrating on what Michael Billig calls 'hot' nationalism, Kedourie fails to see how nations and nationalism have become part of the very structure of modern society, and how they have been absorbed and assimilated by the vast majority of the world's populations for whom the

colourful rhetoric and slogans of some intellectuals are at best decorative extras, 'icing on the cake'. In other words, nationalist intellectuals are important only to the extent that they articulate and help organise fundamental popular sentiments, perceptions and attitudes which derive as much from pre-existing symbols, memories, myths, values and traditions on which the intellectuals draw for their ideologies of the nation, as from the needs of the modern moment.¹⁶

Ideology is undoubtedly a key element in the widespread appeal and success of nationalism. It serves to unify and focus the many grievances and aspirations of different social groups within a particular community or state, and to explain to and activate 'the people', wherever circumstances and technologies permit. But these ideologies are not simply the product of intellectuals, nor are most intellectuals, even those who are caught between competing cultures, free-floating and disoriented, nor are most of them able to exercise the kind of influence that Kedourie attributes to them. The same is true of their ideas, which are effective in society to the extent that they mesh with pre-existing popular notions and collective memories. Only then can they mobilise large numbers of people to demonstrate and march, join movements and work for the liberation and unity of their nation. Only then will people put aside their daily cares and overcome their fears for a time to struggle for some improvement in their lot. Only the most extreme conditions breed apocalyptic visions and only minorities are likely to be attracted to their exponents.

But nationalism is a majority movement, not in the purely numerical sense (after all, most people do not join political organisations, at least not for longer periods) but because in every continent the nation has become the norm of political organisation and nationalism has become the main legitimating belief system. It is unlikely that this state of affairs would have obtained if it were simply the product of deranged intellectuals operating in a social vacuum created by modernisation, or that the mass of the people who adhered to their traditional religions and cultures could have been seduced by such visionary fantasies to create a world of nations.

6 Invention and imagination

The year 1983 saw the publication of two seminal books for the study of nationalism. The first, entitled *The Invention of Tradition*, contained a series of essays on a variety of political rituals, and was edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, with an introductory chapter by Hobsbawm. The second, by Benedict Anderson, under the title *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, put forward some general hypotheses about the development of nationalism in various parts of the world, together with some case studies. Both books stemmed from a Marxist tradition, but sought to move beyond its usual concerns with political economy into the realm of culture by reworking and supplementing them with themes drawn from the analysis of narratives and discourse developed by 'postmodernist' deconstructionism. In both cases, this led to a reading of the nation and nationalism as a central text of modern times, which needed to be unmasked and deconstructed. For both, nations and nationalism are constructs and cultural artefacts; the task of the analyst is to uncover their forms and contents, in order to reveal the needs and interests of those elites and strata which benefit or use their narratives. Hence, in both books a modernist project is overlaid by 'postmodernist' themes and language. The implications of this for the modernist paradigm of nationalism will be explored later.¹

Inventing nations

Nations as 'invented traditions'

In his introduction to *The Invention of Tradition*, Eric Hobsbawm put forward some general propositions about invented traditions, national traditions and the nation. His message was that we can best understand the nature and appeal of nations by analysing national traditions, and that national traditions are one kind of invented traditions. If we could understand the genesis and function of invented traditions, we would be in a position to explain national traditions and therefore nations. What is an 'invented tradition'? Hobsbawm defines it as follows: