

CHAPTER 10

FROM PROTO-REGION TO PROTO-NATION?

In this final chapter we draw together the themes of this research, reflecting on these in relation to the three conceptual tools introduced in chapter 1. These were our definition of identity; Paasi's model of regional formation; and the approach adopted by the new Cornish Studies. But we do this by focusing on two territorially based campaigns for legislative and institutional change - one successful, one a failure. Both were influenced by religious feeling, this link re-emphasising the special role played by religion in the institutionalization of the Cornish identity in the nineteenth century.

The chapter proceeds by outlining the two campaigns before discussing the five elements of our definition of identity – context, difference, integration narrative and process. In order to pursue the process of territorial identity reformulation, Paasi's model of regional formation will be re-visited. We assess the Cornish identity via his concepts of territorial shape, symbolic shape, institutional shape and functional shape (Paasi, 1986). In doing this certain parameters for the regional identity as it had emerged by the early 1880s will become apparent. More specifically, we will conclude that the functional shape achieved by Cornwall provided the territorial identity with a particular 'space of possibilities' that limited its role in the public sphere. (For the concept of space of possibilities see chapter 8 above and Wahrman, 1995, 6). We note that Cornwall's functional shape in the third quarter of the nineteenth century reinforces those who have criticised Paasi as under-theorizing the role of scale and of competition between identity formations at

different scales. In order to insert a greater awareness of scalar inter-relations it will be suggested that more attention needs to be given to issues of power in identity formation.

Finally, the constraints of power structures are, perhaps, especially stark when viewed from an explicit Cornish location. But, in its academic guise of new Cornish Studies, such a perspective also reveals that identity change in the later nineteenth century was not the traumatic and sudden event implied by metropolitan writers. One type of identity did not rapidly and brutally displace another. Rather, there was a more subtle adjustment in the balance of overlapping categories, a slower, though nonetheless real, shift in the balance of conceptualisations of place and people in Cornwall in the later nineteenth century. After the 1860s imaginations of Cornwall as an industrial region, as a centre of industrial civilisation and prowess, gradually gave way to imaginations of Cornwall as a Celtic periphery, primitive and marginal. But these categories to some extent always overlapped. The regional consciousness that had developed during Cornwall's industrial period persisted well into the twentieth century while the arguably more romantic Celtic representations had their roots in earlier periods. What did change was that, after the 1870s, there was no longer a hegemonic representation, at least not in Cornwall. The Cornish identity had entered a more hybrid phase, one more clearly marked by plural Cornwalls rather than a single Cornwall.

New diocese and Sunday closing

Two campaigns provide a context for reviewing the Cornish identity in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. During the 1840s demands surfaced for a separate Anglican diocese for Cornwall. This heralded a long campaign of 'public

meetings and private lobbying, pamphlets, letters to editors, discussion in such assemblies as Convocation, Church Congress and diocesan conferences, and questions and debates in Parliament' (Morrish, 1983, 239). Eventually, in 1876, the Conservative Government recommended a new bishopric for Cornwall, thus dividing the Diocese of Exeter, a territorial arrangement that had combined Cornwall with Devon for ecclesiastical purposes since the eleventh century. While led by clergymen and the gentry, the campaign, which saw its most intensive phase in the 1850s and 60s (Morrish, 1983, 241), brought together Tories and Liberals, Churchmen and lay persons, Anglicans and nonconformists in a broad body of support.

The second campaign attracted a similarly wide, possibly even wider, backing within Cornwall. But this time, the origin of the campaign lay with the nonconformists rather than the Anglicans. In the summer of 1881 a wave of petitions in favour of a Bill for the Sunday Closing of Public Houses flowed out of Cornwall. Nonconformist chapels of all denominations, particularly in mid and east Cornwall, were prominent in this petitioning. In November 1881 the agitation found its focus in a meeting at Truro to establish a Sunday Closing Association for Cornwall, which decided to sponsor a bill for Cornwall, similar to legislation already passed for Wales and Ireland (*WB*, 3 November and 10 November 1881). Over the ensuing year this association organised 170 public meetings and, within four months, in an impressive show of local canvassing, collected a petition of 121,000 names. This was equivalent to almost half the adult population of Cornwall (*WB*, 22 February 1883; 16 March 1882). 'Respectable opinion' was virtually unanimously in favour. For example, at Newquay, all the clergy signed the petition, eight of the nine Poor Law Guardians, eight of the ten School Board members and seven of the

eight Local Board members (*WB*, 23 February 1882). It was only in late 1882 that opposition surfaced. Predictably, this was organised by licensed victuallers, but their counter-petition, of a highly disputed 20,000 signatures, remained a pigmy compared to the massive support for the Bill. However, such virtual unanimity did not guarantee success. In July 1883 Earl Mount Edgcumbe moved the second reading of the Cornwall Sunday Closing Bill in the House of Lords but failed to convince sufficient numbers of his fellow peers (*West Briton*, 19 July 1883). The bill fell and did not re-surface in the pressure of parliamentary business caused by procedural wrangles as the Liberal Government struggled to deal with the obstruction of Irish Nationalist MPs.

Nevertheless, the debate around these campaigns, and the arguments adduced in their favour, open a window onto the ways that Cornwall was imagined at a point when its territorial identity was moving into another phase of change.

The elements of identity

We earlier identified five elements that recur in the literature on identity: context, distinction, integration, narrative and process. The Cornish identity in the 1870s and 1880s appears in hindsight to be on the point of change largely because its context, its specific historical site, was undergoing considerable change.

From 1866 the price of copper ore fell sharply. As a result ore production fell precipitously. Figure 10.1 clearly indicates the effects of this in the shrinking income from copper mining in the 1860s. Tin mining survived but was destined to suffer recurrent crises, noticeably in the mid 1870s and again in the 1890s, as a result of over-supply in the world market. While there was some diversification into arsenic mining this did not have a significant impact on total production (Burt, 1987).

Meanwhile lead ore production in Cornwall had tumbled to insignificant levels by 1880.

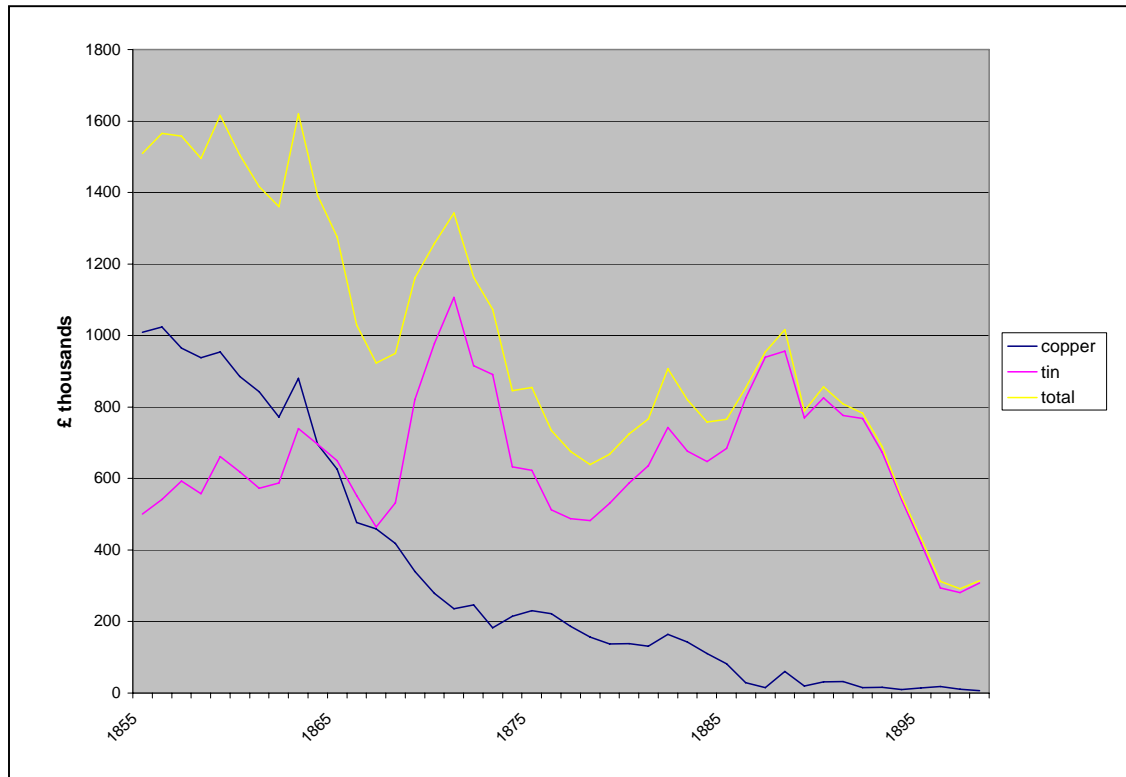


Figure 10.1. Real value of mines output, 1855-1899. Calculated from Burt et al., 1987, xiv.

This picture of deteriorating income from mining in the final third of the nineteenth century has led some writers to make the claim that there was an equally sudden transformation of Cornwall's cultural identity. As we have seen Berg wrote that 'the region was rapidly transformed into a holiday resort' (1994, 112), echoing Pollard's more cautious view that 'Cornwall began to convert from a leading industrial region into a holiday resort area' (1981, 14). Social historians and anthropologists have followed the economic historians' lead. For Dodd (1986) and Korey (1992) Cornwall was opened up to new representations, which, it is even

suggested, 'helped to give Cornwall a visibility and representational identity ... creating its iconography' (Dodd, 1998, 124).

It is certainly the case that new popularisations of broadly romantic representations began to appear around this time. For instance, the Newlyn school of painters in the 1880s brought to a wider, metropolitan audience an image of Cornwall as a place of harmonious folk communities, close to nature and engaged in heroic and tragic struggle with poverty and hardship. In their paintings Cornwall was re-presented as a part of rural (and maritime) England (Deacon, 2001). In place of the dominant representation of Cornwall as 'industrial civilisation' that we traced in chapter 3 this was a representation of Cornwall as primitive and liminal place. The focus had also shifted from mining to fishing communities, a switch also mirrored in the output of dialect literature (Lee, 1899. And see Phillips, 1995). At the same time, the emerging popularity of Cornwall as a tourist destination was, by the 1900s, encouraging the growth of a guide book literature stressing its picturesque aspects to the growing suburban and middle class market of the south east of England. This was encapsulated in the Great Western Railway Company's re-invention of Cornwall as the 'Cornish Riviera' in 1904 (Payton and Thornton, 1995, 91).

The idea of the triumph of new, metropolitan-generated representations tends to be reinforced by notions of a 'great paralysis' in Cornish life. This proposes that Cornwall's society and politics were fossilised in a mid-Victorian mould for a hundred years, consequent upon the demise of its mining industry (Payton, 1992, 119ff). Nevertheless, although the rapid 'down-sizing' of the mining sector clearly led to major restructuring (for some demographic effects see Brayshay, 1977), we might suggest that a focus on the mining contraction leads to an over-concentration

on economic change in the late nineteenth century. This, then, under-estimates continuity and persistence in the cultural sphere.

Moreover, economic reality was not all depression after the 1860s. For instance, Cornish farmers survived the impact of falling prices and agricultural depression from 1873 comparatively well. By transferring resources from grain production to mixed farming and pastoral husbandry and by making use of speedier rail connections to urban areas in order to market early vegetables and fruit, they survived the worst of these depressed years. Farm output at constant prices rose in Cornwall by 5 per cent between 1873 and 1894 and even faster thereafter. Over the whole period from 1873 to 1911, of English counties only Cheshire performed better. Land rents in Cornwall actually rose, by 4.6 per cent from 1872 to 1892, in contrast to a fall in England of almost 17 per cent (Thompson, 1991, 226 and 232-233).

The strength of agricultural rents may have been boosted by demand from returning emigrants for small farms. This reminds us that even the mass emigration of the nineteenth century had some positive impact on Cornish society. Return migrants injected both economic and cultural capital into the Cornwall of the 1880s and 1890s (Perry and Schwartz, 2001). Meanwhile, remittances from those who did not return enabled mining communities to survive the worst years of these decades (Burke, 1981, 142).

Other industries expanded at the same time as mining shrank, and some diversification took place. Fishing communities enjoyed a brief 'railway-related prosperity' in the 1870s and 1880s which only waned in the middle of the 1890s (Rule, forthcoming). Meanwhile, clay production steadily rose at about a million tons a decade from the 1860s onwards and diversification began to occur into

industries such as ship repairing, food processing and explosives by the 1890s (Perry, 2001). In that decade, too, a chain of hotels and seaside villas began to be built along the coast, marking the beginnings of the modern tourist industry. And yet, Cornwall's future, as a resort area dominated by tourism, was not by any means predestined. The same group of capitalists who were investing in hotels were also active in other sectors and Perry has pointed to a Cornish 'modernizing bourgeoisie' active in the 1890s (see Perry, 1998). In 1898, in concluding a debate about Cornwall's future as a holiday resort in the pages of the short-lived *Cornish Magazine*, Arthur Quiller Couch stated, rather reluctantly, that if 'we must cater for the stranger, let us do it well and honestly. Let us respect him and our native land as well' (Quiller Couch, 1898, 237). But, by 1906, at a time when Cornish mining had recovered from the depths of the late 1890s depression, Quiller-Couch was feeling he had 'despaired too soon ... our industries seem in a fair way to revive' (Quiller-Couch, 1928, 194).

What this suggests is that, a generation after the mining collapse of the 1860s, the image of the region in the eyes of the local elite was still related to industry as much as to tourism. Industry also remained a part of the identity of the working class in the older industrial areas. Here, the role of the mining industry was buttressed in the later nineteenth century by the addition of a number of leisure pursuits familiar to industrial regions elsewhere, such as brass bands, male voice choirs, pigeon fancying and a mass spectator sport in (rugby) football (Deacon and Payton, 1993; Robins and Deacon, 1992).

Continuity can also be discerned in other elements of the late nineteenth century identity. In chapters 3 and 4 we saw that, by the 1820s, there was a growing search for distinctiveness, as those elements that marked Cornwall off as different

and unique were emphasised, or invented. This search for distinction underpinned some of the arguments put forward during the campaign for a separate diocese. At first, distinction was framed in social and economic terms. According to the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* in 1854 'the fact of there being a very large proportion of the Cornish people a great mining population, and some of them engaged in our fisheries, renders them an independent, and intelligent, and a self-relying people' (*RCG*, 29 September 1854). Distinction in occupations and attitudes between a Cornish (mining) population and a Devonian (farming) population were joined in the 1860s by 'racial' distinctiveness. Morrish (1981, 247) cites Hobhouse as writing in 1860 that the Cornish were 'of a different race and of a different tone, habits and disposition, to those of Devonshire'. During the 1860s this 'racial' distinction became described as the difference between 'Celt' and 'Saxon'. By 1869 it was being claimed that:

no contiguous counties in England contain populations so entirely distinctive in race from one another as Devon and Cornwall ... The Cornish ... are mostly Celts, akin to the other Gaelic populations of these islands and Brittany ... The labouring classes of Cornwall, as a rule, are to this day decidedly distinct in habits, even in physical aspect, from their neighbours in Devon; and the differences of occupation (the Cornish being mostly miners or fishermen) widens the result of differences in race (Lach-Szyrma, 1869, 8-11).

In 1881 such reasoning re-surfaced. In the meeting establishing the Cornish Sunday Closing Association Canon Arthur Mason claimed that:

on the whole the Cornish people were different in birth (Laughter and applause). They were the relics of a grand old race which were in possession of the whole of England before the Saxons came over, and the Cornish people preserved characteristics which were recognised as distinct. (Hear,

Hear.) [These were] reasons why Cornwall should be treated in the same way as Wales' (*WB*, 10 November 1881).

In pursuing such distinctions contemporaries were also constructing integration and homogeneity. As we saw above, for Lach-Szyrma, the Cornish were 'mostly miners or fisherman', even though only around a quarter of men were directly employed in mining and fishing in 1871. Even this imagined homogeneity became increasingly difficult to construct after the 1870s. As the mining sector contracted absolutely so it reverted onto the original core copper mining district of the west (see Figure 10.2).

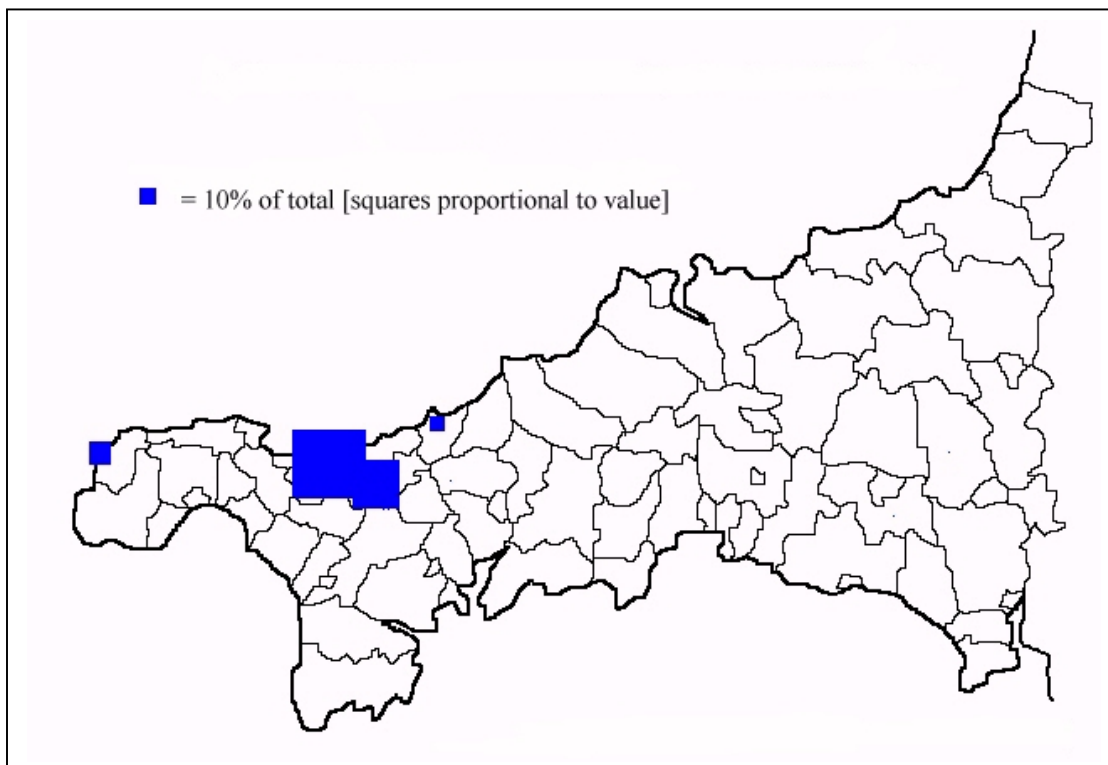


Figure 10.2. Value of mineral output by sub-district, 1897-99. Calculated from Burt et al., 1987.

The limited but noticeable economic diversification after the 1880s also stimulated centrifugal pressures and, as we saw in chapter 7, in doing so, may have

reinforced local territorial identities based on Cornwall's small towns. As economic fragmentation proceeded, however, it was overcome by an increasing appeal to a discourse of Cornishness. For example, at a meeting in support of the Sunday Closing Bill in January 1882 William Andrew of Truro who 'had come as a working man to represent the working class' told the (predominantly middle class) audience that 'there was a time when it was said in Cornwall "30,000 [*sic*] Cornishmen shall know the reason why" and they should now stand as honourable men, and show what Cornishmen can do today' (*WB*, 19 January 1882). Supporters and opponents of the campaign alike appealed on similar grounds. A columnist in the *West Briton* was concerned 'that Cornishmen are being asked to march to certain defeat' (*WB*, 26 January 1882), while it was revealed by T.H.Lukes, a St.Austell publican, that those promoting the bill were 'travelling preachers who were only in the county two or three years, and were not Cornishmen at all' (*WB*, 5 October 1882). Finally, when the bill was defeated in the Lords supporters were consoled by being told that 'all Cornishmen should be proud' of their efforts (*WB*, 22 February 1883).

The population of Cornwall was being appealed to recurrently, even monotonously by the 1880s, via this gender-blind language of shared Cornishness. But they were not just 'Cornishmen'; they were 'Cornishmen' with a shared history.

Shared historical narratives were crucial ways to promote integration and homogeneity. During the nineteenth century a more explicitly Celtic history gradually asserted itself. Morrish (1983, 241) points out how the historical argument was crucial to the success of the campaign for a Cornish diocese. An appeal was made to redress the injustice of the loss of the Cornish bishopric in the eleventh century. By the 1860s the narrative of an independent British church in Cornwall, whose rights had been lost through the forced union with a Devon-based

bishopric, was firmly established and merging into a wider narrative of Celticity. This more explicit (and romantic) Celtic imagination flowered in a speech in support of Sunday Closing by W.C. Borlase, MP for East Cornwall, at Penzance Wesleyan Chapel in 1882:

It is a very remarkable thing that we in Cornwall should have taken up this movement next to Wales ... it seems to me as if it is the light of other days coming back to us. It seems to me as if we are part and parcel of that ancient people, that we have part of the Celtic blood in us, which makes us regard what is evil as a veritable reality ... which makes us feel that we must band together to extirpate it (*WB*, 28 September 1882).

This analogy with Wales and the other Celtic countries was one regularly made by supporters of Sunday Closing. Thus, the Reverend R. Sampson asked 'if such a bill could be carried for the sister kingdoms of Scotland and Ireland, and also for the Principality of Wales why should we not attempt similar legislation for the Duchy of Cornwall?' (*WB*, 10 November 1881).

However, side-by-side with the narrative of Cornish as Celt, there existed other narratives. At a public meeting in 1882 George Smith, prominent Methodist and magistrate, pointing to the Welsh precedent, argued that, like Cornwall, Wales was 'an integral part of the Empire ... if they lost the Bill he trusted that as Cornishmen and as Englishmen they were not ashamed if losing in a good cause' (*WB*, 19 January 1882). Twenty years earlier, in 1863, Hussey Vivian, MP for Swansea but of Cornish descent, had told the Welsh Eisteddfod to 'remember that you are all Englishmen, though you are Welsh' (Morgan, 1997, 93). For the Cornish, a regional identity co-existed with a narrative of Englishness. While this might be viewed as an example of nested territorial identities (Herb and Kaplan, 1999), this particular combination also provided certain constraining parameters, a certain 'space of

possibilities' for the late nineteenth century Cornish identity that we return to later in this chapter.

The subtly changing elements of the local identity, from mining and industrial civilisation to Cornishness and Celtic history, together with the changing impact of broader identities (such as Englishness, imperialism, nonconformity and class), hint at the role of the final two elements in our definition of identity: process and scale. We return to scale towards the end of this concluding chapter. But, to demonstrate process we must turn for guidance to Paasi's model of regional formation.

Regional formation and the Cornish identity

Paasi proposed that regions are social constructions that appear and disappear in a process of institutionalisation. To aid understanding of this process, he distinguished four overlapping stages of institutionalisation, each producing a particular shape. These might be described as territorial shape, when the boundaries of the region are established and awareness of territory distinct from others emerges; symbolic shape, when concepts and symbols associated with the region are created; institutional shape, when institutions based on the region appear and reproduce people's consciousness of inhabiting a particular region; and finally, functional shape, when the region is established in a wider territorial structure and in the spatial consciousness of society (Paasi, 1986, 1991).

The territorial shape of Cornwall was firmly established in the medieval period. Athelstan's settlement and the recognition of the Tamar as, with some exceptions, the eastern boundary of Cornwall endured to the nineteenth century. In the 1840s and 1850s the hazy outlines of an alternative territorial shape could be perceived as the mining industry spilled over the border into west Devon. Nevertheless, while

west-east migration was temporarily significant at mid-century, the social relations of west Cornwall were not exported wholesale across the Tamar. Furthermore, as we saw in chapter 9, west Devon retained considerable differences in crucial aspects such as religious practice.

On the other hand, while Cornwall's territorial shape survived the process of industrialisation relatively unquestioned, it has been the argument of this thesis that a great number of the symbols of the nineteenth century territorial identity were either created or re-fashioned in those years. In the later eighteenth century new symbols of Cornish identity grew out of a set of shared activities and social relations, with their core zone in the mining districts of west Cornwall. The dispersed, independent-minded communities, where life revolved around the fortunes of the local mines, provided the matrix of a unique set of social relations, described here as proto-industrial. Mining, together with a folk-religion of revivalist Methodism, gave this society many of the symbols – the chapel, the engine house and the ideal of industrial prowess among others – through which Cornish people saw themselves.

We have also suggested that, in the 1840s, the social relations constructed during the course of industrialisation in the eighteenth century began to fragment and decompose. Mass emigration, better communications, the rise of respectability, the extension of market relations all played their part in undermining the social compromise of Cornish merchant capitalism. But at the same time we can discern an emerging civic consciousness. A more literate and more articulated sense of regional pride was visible, this time centred on the towns and the small, but growing professional and trading middle classes. The symbols of the territorial identity were, from this point on, likely to be located in narratives of imagined

distinction as much as in the solidarities built on common material conditions and shared activities. Yet, most of the narratives of Cornishness that appeared to be stated more stridently as the century wore on remained firmly rooted in the symbols of proto-industrial society.

For example, during the Sunday Closing campaign the slogan 'One and All' was regularly invoked. The purported instigator of the movement, Edwin Tregelles of Falmouth, had written hoping that 'they would act upon the old Cornish motto "One and All" (*WB*, 10 November 1881). And, on the defeat of the bill, it was stated that 'the promoters of the Bill were possibly animated by the same spirit as those hardy miners of two hundred years ago, who joined so lustily in the song "And Shall Trelawny die; full twenty thousand Cornishmen shall know the reason why" ' (*WB*, 22 February 1883). Earlier events may have been involved but the symbols were creations of the first half of the nineteenth century.

The transformation of the basis of the symbolic identity from the shared activities of the mining industry to imagined attributes of Cornishness also had the potential to transform the geography of the territorial identity. As long as mining was the mainstay of the identity the core zone would remain in the west. But, as Cornishness became more of a civic identity the micro-geography of mining became less fundamental. People, or perhaps more accurately men, anywhere in Cornwall could, after the mid-century, be hailed as, and view themselves as, 'Cornishmen', whether touched by mining or not. Mining retained its iconic status in such cultural productions as dialect stories and the mining landscape retains to this day a special place in the 'moral geography' of Cornishness (Payton, 1996). But anyone anywhere in Cornwall could read stories or view landscapes and, as we have seen, by the end of the nineteenth century the preferred location of dialect tales had in

any case moved from mine to coast and the mining landscape was fast becoming a relict rather than a living landscape.¹

Turning to Cornwall's institutional space, we argued in chapter 5 that formal middle class institutions such as literary societies and the press were playing a key role in reproducing the Cornish identity by the mid-nineteenth century. Such institutions were, of course, familiar elements in local and regional identities across England and Wales. For the working class, the less formal social institutions of work and religion were more important. However, the period of industrialisation had also seen the demise of other administrative institutions that had helped to construct a unique territorial shape for Cornwall in earlier times. Principal among these was the institution of the stannaries. According to Buckley (2001, 2),

the formation of the stannaries, followed by the creation of the Duchy, helped to give identity to the Cornish, and to mark them out as different, not just in character and background, but legally, through a recognised status enshrined in the laws and constitution of the English nation, of which the Cornish became, perhaps reluctantly, a part.

But this special legal status within England began to decay after the Tudor period. By the nineteenth century the 'ancient stannary system [had been] allowed to gradually wither on the vine and pass out of use' (Buckley, 2001, 21). Abolition of tin coinage in 1836/37 and the Stannary Act of 1896, which effectively made Stannary Courts a division of the County Courts, were the final death-knell for this unique medieval institution. In its place was put a new administrative institution, but one hardly unique to Cornwall - the county council of 1889. While, together

¹ While the argument here is that the link between mining and the territorial identity loosens after the mid-nineteenth century the sparse evidence for the geography of the Cornish identity at the end of the twentieth century suggests a west-east gradient remains in terms of strength of identification with Cornwall (see Gosschalk et al., 1994; Aldous and Williams, 2001).

with the new Cornish diocese, giving Cornwall a political and institutional shape, the consequences were profound.

Paasi's fourth and final 'shape', the establishment of a region in the wider regional structure and in the spatial consciousness of the extra-regional society, is a crucial part of the formation of regional identity. For Paasi, identity does not emerge in a simple fashion out of the 'shapes' we have been discussing. Figure 10.2 reproduces Figure 1.2 from chapter 1.

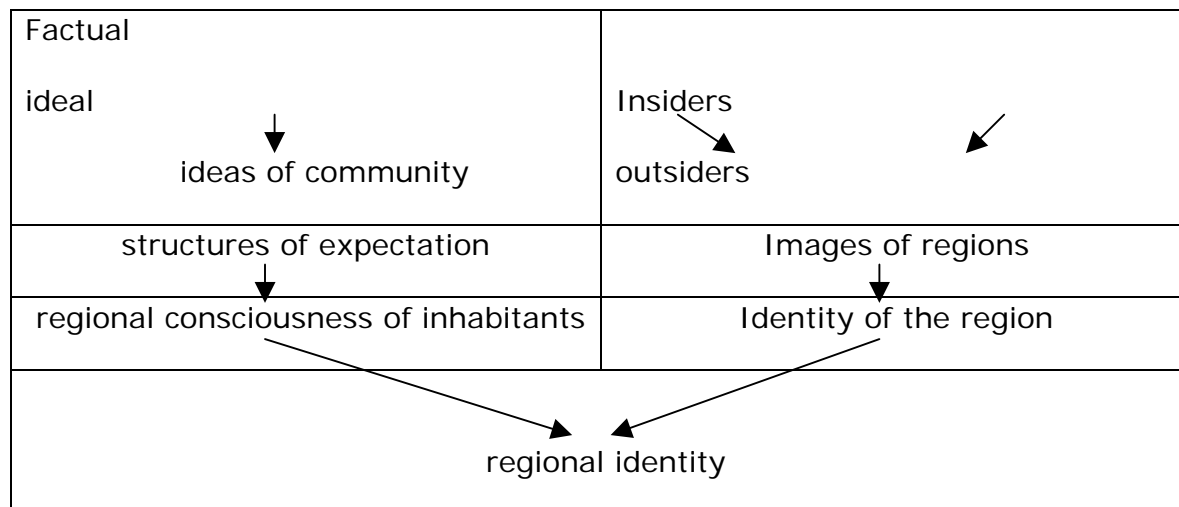


Figure 10.3. Paasi's model of the formation of regional identity. (Based on Paasi, 1986).

Regional identity is partly the product of the regional consciousness of the inhabitants, itself formed by 'factual' (shared activities) and 'ideal' (imagined) elements. As suggested above, both kinds of element can be perceived at work in the reproduction of the consciousness of Cornish people by the later nineteenth century. And we have also suggested that the 'factual' part of this equation had given way to the 'ideal' after the 1840s. However, regional identity is also produced by the images of the region. Here, we might note the image of Cornwall as a mining

region, held by both insiders and outsiders before the 1840s. Yet we might also note a dissolution of this image and the appearance and re-appearance of other images: of Cornwall as a 'Celtic' place, of Cornwall as a primitive margin, of Cornwall as part of a harmonious rural England, of Cornwall as a place for leisure and relaxation, in the years after the 1870s. The changing kaleidoscope of popular images of Cornwall in the later nineteenth century implies a growing divergence. In addition, this divergence can, to some extent, be mapped onto the insider/outsider distinction. Insiders were more likely to cling to the 'classic' image of Cornwall as a centre of industrialisation (albeit a now failed industrialisation rather than 'industrial civilisation'). Outsiders were, on the other hand, quicker to adopt various romantic tropes of Cornwall (for examples see Hudson, 1908; Mais, 1928).

Nevertheless, there was one image that, in the late nineteenth century, both insiders and outsiders shared. This was the image of Cornwall as an English county. By the 1880s, Cornwall could be regarded as both socio-economically 'different' and culturally and historically 'distinct'. But, politically, 'Cornwall was in a different position to what Ireland and Wales was, being an integral part of England' (*WB*, 10 November 1881). Accepting this status, and few if any voices were being raised in the 1880s to deny it, meant that the proposers of the Cornish Sunday Closing Bill were forced to make a case for 'exceptional legislation' for Cornwall. The campaign was, from the start, bedevilled by the question posed by the Reverend D.T.Harrison at Penzance: 'why should a special act be required for it more than other parts of England?' (*WB*, 5 January 1882). Such an act could be viewed as 'piecemeal legislation'. And, as a *West Briton* editorial argued, this was 'piecemeal legislation brought to an absurdity. However remote Cornwall may be from London, and whatever may be said in joke about it being out of England, it is still one of

England's counties' (*WB*, 19 January 1882). R.G.Brett, Liberal MP for Truro, argued that, while the Welsh Sunday Closing Act could be passed on 'special and exceptional grounds', these 'cannot be said to apply to so small an area as an English county – a principle of partial legislation which I cannot think is for the public advantage' (*WB*, 16 February 1882). Even worse, opponents claimed this was 'parochial' legislation, leading to 'Cornwall being isolated, as it were, from the rest of England' (*WB*, 17 August 1882, 5 October 1882). Accepting the same image, of Cornwall as an English county, meant that proponents of the Sunday Closing Bill found it difficult to follow the logic of their claims for parity with the 'sister kingdoms' of Scotland, Ireland and Wales. Indeed, at the same time as arguing for Cornish difference, Canon Mason, a leader of the campaign, accepted at the inaugural meeting of the Sunday Closing Association, that 'Cornish people were very happy to be united to England, and they did not wish for Home Rule. (Laughter)' (*WB*, 10 November 1881). The Cornish were, as the title of their most widely read newspaper reminded them every week, content to view themselves as 'West Britons' at this time.

Thus, by the 1880s, Cornish men at least were uniting around a narrative of shared origins, contemporary economic distinctiveness and Celtic imaginings. A distinct regional consciousness had been re-forged over the years of industrialisation. Yet, ethnic consciousness was rendered opaque and hesitant by a parallel narrative of Englishness. The regional identity did not, at this time, produce a national identity. The latter was made difficult by the 'space of possibilities' that surrounded the Cornish identity. The absence of a distinct cultural institution such as, in Wales, the Welsh language, or formal institutions as, in Scotland, separate ecclesiastical or legal structures, meant that there was relatively little around which

national imaginings could cohere. In contrast, the consensus was that Cornwall was an English county, albeit a distinct one, and this was to remain a dominant image right through the twentieth century.

The closest comparison is, perhaps, Mann. Here also, a campaign around a bishopric, this time to defend the independent Bishopric of Sodor and Man, introduced the language of modern nationalism into the island. This was buttressed by the late nineteenth-century Celtic renaissance and antiquarian enquiries into the dying Manx language and its associated folklore. In Mann too, the local territorial identity was heavily influenced by wider tropes of Britishness, a 'relational' nationalism that was 'constructed and defined through complex interaction within wider cultural and political contexts' (Belchem, 2000, 220).

Nevertheless, as Paasi notes, ideas can change generationally (Paasi, 1991). The Cornish generation that had been socialized in the 1840s and 1850s had adopted a narrative of cultural distinctiveness within a wider frame of a nonconformist English identity. But, by the 1900s, a small minority of a later generation were beginning to make more explicit analogies with other 'Celtic' countries and beginning to question the status of Cornwall as an English county (Hale, 1997; Saunders, 1982). Ideas of a non-English and Celtic history, plus the symbolic role of the Cornish language, remained available for appropriation as the raw material for a more explicit 'Celtic' revival. And appropriated they were in the Cornish 'Revival' of the early twentieth century (Thomas, 1963). Nevertheless, this appropriation to a degree rested on and ultimately blended with the sense of 'difference' that was created during the process of industrialisation.

Scale and Cornwall

The conceptual insights of Paasi's approach have been brought together here with an empirically informed study of a particular historical geography. This has allowed us to develop a comparative account of Cornwall and to comprehend aspects of the nineteenth century territorial identity. We have seen how a Cornish identity co-existed with spatial identities at different scales. On a larger scale, there was an identity of Englishness, one that merged with later nineteenth century British Imperialism. On a smaller scale, local and urban identities competed with a Cornish level of territorial allegiance. In some ways, this is an example of the 'nesting' of identities within a hierarchy of geographical scales as proposed by Herb and Kaplan (1999, 4). But the Cornish identity did not just 'nest' within other identities. Its setting also had politico-geographic implications. To an extent it was in competition with local identities and constrained by the wider identity of Englishness. It is here, as MacLeod points out, that Paasi's model is less helpful. There is:

little in the way of a *theoretically* guided discussion as to how competing narratives of place – national autarky, aspirant nationalism, unionism or regionalism – can often come to vie for hegemony within any given space, and thereby provide some capacity for a re-casting of its symbolic and institutional shape (MacLeod, 1998, 839).

In order to pursue this issue further there needs to be more awareness of what Terlow has termed 'territories of control', the imposition of regulation via regional structures (2001, 79). In this dimension of control the power to establish and to resist dominant territorial narratives becomes crucial. To this extent, the construction of cultural spaces can be viewed as 'power geometries' (Mitchell, 2000, xxi). And, in these power geometries, the role of the state is central, in delineating the possibilities of the 'regional' and in actively constructing an identity based on

the territory of the state. In the 1800s the (English) national narrative was clearly 'hegemonic'. The Cornish identity was subordinate to that broad spatial identity. Allowed some autonomy in the cultural sphere, it was severely circumscribed in the political. Attitudes that were to become common during the twentieth century, accepting Cornwall's cultural distinctiveness yet denying, belittling or ignoring any assertion of political distinctiveness, were already firmly in place by the 1880s (for a similar argument applied to Celtic Britain more generally see Pittock, 1999).

Adopting an explicit Cornish Studies perspective has thus alerted us to the constraints placed on the Cornish identity by wider territorial identities. Furthermore, it hints at the importance, if we wish to deconstruct 'Cornwall' as a concept, of moving from a focus on the distinctiveness of Cornwall towards an analysis of the power structures within which that distinctiveness has been reproduced.

Conclusion

What wider relevance does this study of Cornwall have? We might suggest a number of areas where the case of the transformation of the Cornish identity between the mid-eighteenth century and the later nineteenth century may have more general applicability.

The first lesson is methodological. Studying a particular territory has reinforced the value of studying identity as a way of opening up an interdisciplinary bridge across sometimes impassable boundaries. For instance, we have argued in this dissertation that local people exercised some agency in the creation of their own regional identity (cf. Thompson, 2001). In this concluding chapter that agency has been traced even into Cornwall's 'post-industrial' period. But the study also

reinforces the point that local agency always interacts with wider structures. This inter-relationship and the way it changes over time, plus the detailed configuration of the borders and overlaps between the local and the global, requires an openness to both representations and material structures.

Secondly, we might see this work as part of a project that revises the oversimplistic 'metropolitan' picture of Cornwall and its identity in the modern period. An approach sensitive to local agency and to the representations and discourses adopted by Cornish people in its industrial phase has reminded us of the complexities of the period. It has been claimed that 'the historian's function is often that of restoring complexity to past reality which some bold and excessively binary conceptual scheme has made too simple' (cited in Runciman, 2001, 28). The same can be said of Cornish Studies. In examining the case of Cornwall from a Cornish Studies perspective, we see how, in contrast to claims made from a metropolitan perspective, ideas of Cornwall did not suddenly change somewhere around 1870. Continuity, rather than change, is restored to the post-1840 period. Local narratives of territorial identity that can be recognised in the later nineteenth century had their roots in the construction of difference that marked the first third of the century. Furthermore, the symbolic repertoire drawn on by these imaginings can be assigned to the particular experience of industrialisation that began in the early eighteenth century.

Cornwall's early industrialisation and the unique social relations accompanying it provided the context, the 'space of possibilities', for this identity. That industrialisation also generated a revised set of representations of Cornwall that came together in the early decades of the nineteenth century to produce an ideology of 'industrial civilisation'. In such ways Cornwall resembled industrial

regions elsewhere in Britain. But this was an industrial region that, because of the constraints imposed by its resource and population base, could not move beyond a proto-regional phase. At the same time the clerical gentry and antiquarian classes in Cornwall reproduced a historical narrative that cemented older elements of ethnic distinction in Cornish memories. By the mid-nineteenth century, therefore, overlapping categories can be glimpsed. A pride in dynamic industrialisation co-existed with a nostalgic county patriotism and a residual sense of ethnic distinctiveness.

Such overlapping categories continued into the later, post-industrial period. Cornwall's de-industrialisation did not destroy the symbols created during industrialisation. On the contrary, these clung on. Indeed, at times (for example when the Cornish rugby team won the county championships in 1908) they were revitalized. Mass emigration had also introduced an extra-territorial, overseas dimension into the reproduction of the Cornish identity. In the overseas diaspora, imaginations of 'industrial civilisation', in the form of what others have termed the myth of 'Cousin Jack' (see Payton, 1999), lived on into the twentieth century. This multi-focal international geography of Cornishness acted to replenish and reinforce more traditional representations of industrial Cornwall through the mechanisms of return migration and transcontinental communications.

But the images introduced in the course of Cornwall's industrialisation were joined by others. Most notably Cornwall was more likely to be imagined after the 1860s, by outsiders and insiders alike, as 'Celtic'. This particular imagination combined with other historical narratives, together with considerable remnants of the Cornish language in the physical and literary landscape, to propel a Cornish cultural 'revival' in the twentieth century that looked back more explicitly to its

'Celtic' roots. There had been a shift of balance, from proto-region to proto-nation, from homogenous, mining and industrial region to hybrid, post-industrial and tourist region. However, in order to explain these post-industrial imaginings of Cornwall it has been essential for us to understand the complexities of Cornwall's industrial period. Those years ought no longer to be viewed as an embarrassing void between the Cornish identity of the late medieval period and the re-discovered Cornish identity of the twentieth century. In contrast, while the roots of the industrial society that emerged in the eighteenth century can be traced back to that medieval period, the identity of the twentieth century can only be fully grasped in the light of the complexities of its industrial period.

Finally, the Cornish case may offer a possible point of comparison for some other territorial identities that do not fall neatly into preconceived categories but where there is marked competition between competing narratives. In chapter 2 we pointed out how Cornwall has been hitherto constructed as either an English county or as a Celtic nation. But neither of these categories seem capable of incorporating the real subtleties of this hybrid identity, both 'county' and 'national', and sometimes neither. This implies that a study of the Cornish identity in its industrial period does not offer obvious comparative lessons for clearly regional identities such as that of north-east England, nor national identities such as the Welsh. Rather, it presents possibly more useful comparisons for cases where competing territorial loyalties have clashed and, historically, produced new forms of identity. The obvious case in the British Isles is that of the loyalist identity of Ulster. Perhaps here is a place where further comparison, sensitive to differences of scale, may bear unexpected fruit (see Payton, 1996e).