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**The CCP's Concept of Nationality and the
Work of Ethnic Identification amongst
China's Minorities**

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I. Introduction

In the People's Republic of China (PRC), the formal definition of the Chinese word min-zu (民族) or "nationality" (literally, people or ethnic group) is one of the most important features used for identifying a person. This, together with one's full name, sex, age, domicile and other items, is kept on file in all one's legal and official records, such as those used in court proceeding. Demonstrably it is part of each citizen's life record. Thus a series of questions may be raised: Why is it part of the legal identity? What is the CCP's concept of "nationality" in relation to the identification of minority nationalities? So far how many nationalities have been identified in China? Legally speaking, can a man change his nationality or reject the officially ascribed nationality and yet identify himself with another one? What kinds of problems has the Chinese government's identification of minorities entailed since the inauguration of the People's Republic in 1949? Compared with multi-ethnic states, what is the significance of China's experience with the problems of governing a multi-cultural society both from academic and practical standpoints?

In order to answer these and other questions, I hope:

1) to describe the socio-political context of China's experience of governing a multi-cultural society;

2) to delineate China's nationality problem in a new perspective, i.e., to delineate the theoretical framework behind the identification of minorities conducted by the Chinese government, including guidelines generated from Marxism-Leninism and the CCP's own experience, as well as

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practical problems. One crucial question with which I will deal in this regard is that of how to establish an administrative hierarchy to define all minority nationalities with different population sizes;

3) to explore the minorities' reactions to the government's identification work and their demands as well as aspirations for equal status; and

4) to present a theoretical discussion on the problems of identification work in the People's Republic of China in terms of the findings in this study.

II. Rise of the Problem

It is widely recognized that the People's Republic of China founded in 1949 not only radically broke with tradition, due to its Marxist ideology, but also inherited some age-old problems, of which one was how to deal with its numerous minority groups. Although the non-Han Chinese minorities amount only to six percent of its total population, they are scattered over fifty to sixty percent of her total territory and constitute the majority population in some very sensitive border areas.¹ They are both highly culturally and physically heterogeneous.² They range in economic status from peoples who are more urbanized than the majority Han Chinese, such as the Russians in Manchuria; to tribes who have only recently abandoned slash-and-burn agriculture, such as the Dulungs in Yunnan. Prior to 1949, according to Mao Ze-dong, the inequality of the Chinese minorities had increased as a result of political oppression and social discrimination. He further said that the nationalities struggle is, in the final analysis, a problem of class struggle.³ Following Marxist doctrine, nationality and ethnic distinctions will eventually disappear only after class and state differences have disappeared and a homogeneous proletarian culture has come into being.⁴ Under this guideline, the problem of nationalities must be dealt with according to a policy of national equality, i.e., for all minority nationalities to be of equal status with the Han Chinese, the most populous nationality in China. Theoretically, in the People's Republic of China there should be neither Han Chauvinism nor parochial nationalism. Furthermore, instead of a policy of forced assimilation, since 1949 the CCP has proposed a policy of letting the minority nationalities base the development of their political, economic, and cultural life on their own special characteristics, so that each of their individual ways of life could be brought closer

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together and improved. According to the CCP, only through a full development of nationality distinctions during the period of socialist construction could they more early be induced to cast off their backwardness and have an influence on each other which would eventually lead to a natural amalgamation. This is appropriately dialectical.⁵ With regard to the concrete contents of the policy, the articles from the Common Program stipulated by the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in 1949 constitute most of its essential elements. They are worthy of being cited here:

Article 50: All nationalities within the boundaries of the People's Republic of China are equal. They shall establish unity and mutual aid among themselves, and shall oppose imperialism and their own public enemies, so that the People's Republic of China will become a big fraternal and cooperative family composed of all nationalities. Great nation chauvinism shall be opposed. Acts involving discrimination, oppression, and splitting of the unity of the various nationalities shall be prohibited.

Article 51: Regional autonomy shall be exercised in areas where national minorities are concentrated, and various kinds of autonomy organizations of the different nationalities shall be set up according to the size of the respective populations and regions. In places where different nationalities live together and in the autonomous areas of the national minorities, the different nationalities shall each have an appropriate number of representatives in the local organs of political power.

Article 52: All national minorities within the boundaries of the People's Republic of China shall have the right to join

the People's Liberation Army and to organize local people's security forces in accordance with the unified military system of the state.

Article 53: All national minorities shall have freedom to develop their dialects and languages, to preserve or reform their traditions, customs, and religious beliefs. The People's Government shall assist the masses of the people of all national minorities to develop their political, economic, cultural, and educational construction work.

All the articles related to minorities of the following 1954, 1975, 1978, and 1982 Constitutions are based on and elaborated from those articles as cited above.⁷ To sum up the CCP's nationalities policy in one phrase, it is, "one state but many nationalities," or "political integration but cultural diversification."

Underlying the above is a problem of the definition of nationality, which must be applicable and feasible within state policy toward its minorities, in order to provide actual services such as: establishment of national autonomous areas, allocation of representative seats, development of national languages, and so on. In other words, without proper recognition of the different existing nationalities, the principle of national equality would be meaningless.

III. Ethnic Identification and Classification

By 1955 due to the CCP's encouragement over 400 groups publicly claimed to have their own respective ethnic identity and asked the government authorities to be registered as separate ethnic groups.⁸ After extensive field work, beginning in 1953, had been carried out by ethnologists, linguists and cadres,⁹ and subdivisions, different locations, different translations of the similar groups had been eliminated, many independent ethnic groups were officially defined and recognized. At that time, it was necessary to define nationality. As a corollary, the necessary criteria for underlying this definition has to be enumerated. What were the problems the CCP faced in their ethnic identification process? How did the minorities themselves consider the problem of ethnic identification?

A. Theoretical Framework for Ethnic Identification

The word min-zu has been used variously by Chinese Communist theoreticians as either a people, a nation, a nationality or an ethnic group since the inauguration of the People's Republic of China in 1949.¹⁰ For instance, in 1953, Fan Wen-lan, a very famous historian, cited Stalin's definition of a nation, according to its Soviet usage Natsiya, as:¹¹

A historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.

From the above, he concluded that the Han Chinese nation was formed during the period of the Qin Dynasty (221 B.C. - 206 B.C.) and the Han Dynasty (207 B.C. - 220 A.D.) in terms of its "unified and standardized

written system" (common language), "vast territory behind the Great Wall" (a common territory), "fellow countrymen with similar cultural pattern" (a common psychological make-up) and "carts with the same length of axis" (a common economic life in terms of the official standardization measurements). However, Fan's conclusion was regarded as contradictory to Marxism-Leninism and totally unaccepted by many CCP's theoreticians due to Stalin who said: "Nations are historically determined....., having been formed at the time of the collapse of feudalism and the rise of capitalism."¹² Since most historians considered that the time of the collapse of feudalism and the rise of capitalism in China could be traced back only to the time of Opium War (1842), this meant that the formation of China as a nation must have taken place after this war. Other theoreticians went to even further extremes. Strictly following Lenin's and Stalin's distinction between a "nation" (natsiya) formed at the time of rise of capitalism and a "nationality" (narodnost) formed before that, they referred to the Chinese people at the precapitalist stage as bu-zu (部族)(literally, tribe), a translation directly from the Russian word Narodnost (nationality).¹³ Thus, it resulted in a very serious controversy over the question of whether it was correct to refer to not only those minorities still in a primitive stage of development but also the Han Chinese prior to their arrival at capitalism as bu-zu (tribe) which many people regarded as a disgraceful term with negative implications.¹⁴

After checking all the terms related to nationality in the works of the Marxist-Leninist pantheon written in German and Russian, such as:

<u>Russian</u>	<u>German</u>
Narod	Volk
Natsiya	Nation
Narodnost	Nationalitat

nationalities workers, scholars and cadres from more than thirty different organizations held a conference in the spring of 1962 and concluded that it was entirely proper to employ the Chinese term min-zu for all of the foreign terms listed above.¹⁵ In taking this position, some theoreticians claimed that they found evidence for the view in the German language texts written by Marx and Engels, that the identification of a group as a nation does not depend upon its stage of development, but rather upon its inherent cohesion as an integrated group.¹⁶ Furthermore, a prominent nationalities researcher, Ya Han-chang, even pointed out that the confusion in the use of related terms actually was due to a mistranslation of Stalin's works, i.e., a mistranslation of the Russian word Narodnost (literally, nationality) into Chinese bu-zu (literally, tribe). According to Ya, there is a very significant difference between the words Natsiya (nation) and Narodnost (nationality) which Stalin himself had carefully discerned and demarcated in his works. The former refers to a nation at the capitalist stage; the latter, to a nation at the pre-capitalist stage. However, Ya insisted that the latter should not be translated into Chinese bu-zu (literally, tribe), a term with negative meaning.¹⁷

As a result of that conference, a conclusion was reached by the conferences that any of the Chinese ethnic groups, regardless of how backward their socio-economic conditions might be, should be referred to as min-zu (literally, ethnic group) with additional words such as "precapitalist stage" or "modern or capitalist stage" in parentheses, if necessary.¹⁸ This solution, as Moseley has pointed out, is heretical as compared with more traditional Marxist-Leninist theory, because the term is supposed to be a distinct attribute of the capitalist stage of development. However, like other heresies committed by the CCP in applying Marxism and Leninism to China, it seems vital¹⁹ even though

the CCP's theoreticians still have not settled this question at the present time.²⁰

B. Problems of Identification and Classification

The steps between proposing a definition of min-zu and applying it to specific groups were taken by nationalities workers, ethnologists, linguists and local cadres, without strict scientific method or detailed procedures. Although it is not self-evident whether a particular ethnic group deserves to be called a separate nationality or a sub-group of a given nationality, the term min-zu is usually applied in a rather offhand manner to already recognized groups, without any effort made to show by concrete evidence that Stalin's four criteria as elucidated by Fan Wenlan have been fully tested and in fact satisfied. In other words, the approach towards ethnic identification in practice is more dependent on traditional uncritical enumeration rather than on the academic analysis of the ethnic constituents.

Thus, it is definitely by no means true that the nationalities workers faced no problems in the field for their identification work. According to a decree protecting the rights of dispersed minorities, issued by the State Council on February 22, 1952:²¹

Due to different historical factors, for many years or even many generations, some minorities in our country have been widely distributed in the Han Chinese areas. Most of them live in cities and towns. Under reactionary rule they had suffered from political oppression and racial discrimination for a long time, so they could not but hide their ethnic origins, change their ethnic constituents and conceal their ethnic traits in order to survive.

They were encouraged by the People's Government to have themselves registered and, then, to have their rights restored.

However, this is only the tip of the iceberg. There are still lots of problems, with a relatively only a small number of groups, that are very complicated and still need intensive investigation for satisfactory resolution. According to Fei Xiao-tong (1981:61-63), a prominent anthropologist in China these problems may be summed up as follows:

1. Some minority groups, as the case presented in the government's decree stated above, had dispersed over history and migrated in different directions due to socio-political oppression and discrimination. They had come into contact with the Han and, thus, been deeply influenced by the latter's culture. As a result of assimilation, some of them had changed their language, lost many of their cultural traits and economically became inseparable from the Hans. Being still discriminated against, they lived in their own communities and considered themselves distinct minorities. An example is the She minority who are scattered in the provinces of Fujian, Jianxi and Guangdong.

2. Some Hans had adopted a particular subsistence pattern and migrated to relatively isolated areas. Although their descendants retained Han characteristics, they were unaware of their origins and registered themselves under a name given by other people in their locality. An example is the Dans living along the China's southeast coast areas in Fujian and Guangdong provinces.

3. Different Han groups migrated to the same minority area but at different times. Having been long cut off from the rest of the Han majority, they had developed a particular language and customs different from later Han arrivals, and were even discriminated against by the latter. Thus, the descendants of the former groups requested recognition as separate minorities. An example is the Chuanqings in Guizhou province.

4. In traditional China, the imperial rulers often colluded with the upper class of the minorities to dominate the minority people through a special designed system, such as the tu-si (土司) (literally, native chiefdom) system. After 1949, the year of inauguration of the People's Republic, various dominated groups publicly refused to recognize their oppressing groups as minorities because of the latter's cultural similarity to the Han majority. This is the case with the Tujia in Hunan province.

5. Subgroups of a single minority group have broken off and migrated to different parts of the country. Although they basically had retained the same language, customs, and traditional legends as their parent group, they acquired different names, under which they were registered after 1949, in their respective localities. An example is the Buzhuang in Guangxi, who were originally the Zhuang.

6. Sections of a single group distributed widely in a number of areas have adopted the culture and life-style of their neighbor nationalities. However, these subgroups continued to speak their original language and were known by the same name. An example is the so-called Xifan in Sichuan and Yunnan, who actually are subgroups of the Tibetans.

7. Sections of a minority group were scattered over wide areas and had formed many disconnected communities whose language and culture showed both similarities and considerable differences. These dispersed subgroups with the same ethnic origin had all along been known by the same name by the other minorities amongst whom they lived. An example is the Yi in Sichuan, Guizhou and Guangxi Provinces.

Any nationality worker trying to identify a nationality in the field may face complicated problems as stated above. Therefore, one should make sure whether the ethnic group in question falls into the category of an independent nationality unit or just only a part of the Han Chinese or any other nationality. Since the PRC is founded on

Marxist-Leninist ideology which stresses the equality of nationalities regardless of their population sizes, or their degree of socio-economic development, the work of ethnic identification to ascertain the exact number of minority nationalities and their distribution is vital to the government in order to maintain equal treatment.²²

C. Ethnic Identification and Nationality Affairs

The administrative and other affairs related to the problem of ethnic identification in minority areas can be summed up in the following:

1. In 1952 an administrative hierarchy of national and regional autonomy was set up for all minority nationalities.²³ According to the CCP, the regional autonomy system is the one key for resolving the national question; for the claim to political authority by the minority nationalities themselves, e.g., management of their own internal affairs, is the claim of the united masses of all nationalities. To carry out this policy is to reconcile completely the principles of socialist democracy and nationalities equality under Marxism-Leninism.²⁴ By 1980, five autonomous regions (qu), twenty-nine autonomous prefectures (zhou) and seventy-five autonomous counties (xian) were established in the areas where minority nationalities are concentrated.²⁵ All the administrative units at the three different levels may be classified into the following types based on their ethnic relationships, economic conditions and historical development.²⁶

- a. those established on the basis of an area inhabited by one minority nationality only;
- b. those established on the basis of an area inhabited by one large minority nationality, and including areas inhabited by other minority nationalities with small populations; and

- c. those established on the basis of a number of areas each of which is inhabited by a different minority nationality.

2. During the past three decades, a large educational system with a network of schools and other institutes especially for the minority nationalities has been established. For instance, the eleven colleges of nationalities located in Beijing, Kunming, Guangzhou, Wuhan, Chengdu, Xian, Nanning, Xining, Langzhou, Urumchi and Guiyang in principle take students from every local minority.²⁷ This is why this writer happened to see a Hezhe student, (the Hezhe being the smallest nationality in China with a population of only about 1,000), from Manchuria in the Central College of nationalities at Beijing and some Va students from the remote border area in the Yunnan College of Nationalities at Kunming, 1980. Identification as ethnic minority plays a very important role in the acceptance of minority students by those colleges. In addition, lower pass-marks are required for entrance examination into other colleges and universities.

3. Minority nationalities are given preference, as a privilege, in military recruitment. When recruited, they are expected to meet the same physical qualifications but not to meet the same educational requirements as Han recruits.²⁸ Special attention is given to the military servicemen who are recruited from the nationalities with Islamic belief, such as the Hue, Uyгур, Kazak, Uzbek, Tartar, Kergez, Tajik, Dongxiang, Sala, and Baoan, for their special food prohibition.²⁹ Thus, the ethnic factor also plays an important role in military recruitment.

4. As a Western social scientist points out, a group's ethnic identity is greatly enhanced when it possesses its own language.³⁰ Both the Common Program of the People's Political Consultative Conference (a semi-constitution) and the new 1982 constitution guarantees the use

and development of minority languages. Only through their use and development will ancestral languages increase one nationality's ability to resist another group's encroachment and, therefore, to avoid possible assimilation. We may say that languages, both spoken and written, may be regarded as a significant trait of ethnic identification.

Among the fifty-five minority nationalities, only eighteen have their own written languages. The Mongols, Tibetans, Uygurs, Koreans, Kazaks, Xibos, Dais, Uzbeks, Kergezs, Tartars, and Russians have written systems in popular use, while the Yis, Naxis, Miaos, Jingpos, Lisus and Lahus seldom use their written languages.³¹ To carry out the work of ethnic identification and classification, seven teams consisting of more than 700 specialists and cadres were organized in 1956 and sent to sixteen provinces and autonomous regions under the direction of the Academy of Sciences and other institutions. It was the most extensive investigation of minorities that had taken place in Chinese history.³² So far, ten written phonetic languages have been created for the Zhuangs, Bouyeis, Miaos, Dongs, Kazaks, Lis, etc., three have been reformed for the Jingpos, Lahus and Dais; and two others have been substituted for by using Roman alphabet for the Arabic ones of the Uygurs and Kazaks.³³ In 1980 at the Third Conference on National Languages, several proposals were submitted for dealing with different issues, such as the creation and promulgation of written languages, the reform of existing written systems, the reorganization of teams working on minority languages, though these proposals have largely not yet been implemented.³⁴

During the past three decades a communication network with newspapers, magazines, T.V. and radio broadcasting based on the media of native languages has also been established in order to create a sense of patriotism and encourage the development of cultural heritages as well as the allegiance to the CCP and the state. Besides the Central People's

Radio Station in Beijing, which has Mongol, Tibetan, Uygur, Kazak and Korean programs daily, stations in Inner Mongolia, Tibet, Xinjiang, Heilongjiang, Jilin, Yunnan, Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and several other national autonomous areas ordinarily broadcast using dozens of native languages.³⁵

5. According to the articles 121 and 134 of the new 1982 constitution, all minority nationalities have the right to conduct legal proceedings in their own languages, and all administrative organs of autonomous areas have to use one or several native languages commonly used by the local nationalities, when they perform their duties. This is also closely related to the work of ethnic identification and classification, by which different native languages can be identified and recognized as public media in given autonomous area.

6. Minority nationalities receive leniency regarding family planning requirements. For example, instead of the one-child policy, in Guangdong a Yao family could have three children, in Yunnan a Samei family, two.

All those factors as stated above both as cause and effect not only made the work of ethnic identification and classification necessary and indispensable but also induce and strengthen the minority nationalities' sense of ethnic identity. However, this work is of an "etic" approach conducted mainly by outside ethnologists, linguists and cadres, and has little involvement by the target nationalities themselves, even though it is said that "consultation with the leaders and masses of each group" has been done.³⁶ Because of lack of advanced research facilities and qualified personnel, work was done in a rather conventional or even arbitrary manner and was completely stopped by the Cultural Revolution.³⁷ For instance, the so-called Pingwu "Tibetans," a group of a few thousand

people located in the border area between Sichuan and Gansu provinces neither consider themselves nor are considered by the Tibetans in other areas as Tibetans in terms of their particular language and customs.³⁸ In other words, their "Tibetan" status is assigned by the outsiders charged with the work of identification and classification. Thus, very serious questions can be raised: In general what is the minority nationalities' attitude towards that work? How do they feel about their ethnic identity from a socio-political perspective?

IV. Ethnic Identification and Classification through the Minorities' Eyes

In addition to the "etic" approach as stated in the last chapter, which analyzes an observed situation in order to identify an under studied ethnic group in terms of the external system of the observer, i.e., the external system of the ethnologists, linguists and cadres, an "emic" approach is also needed to understand the conceptual system of the observed, i.e., the conceptual system of the minorities themselves and to state findings as much as possible within their own conceptual framework. Since a group's ethnic identity must consist of their subjective symbolic or emblematic use of any aspect of culture in order to differentiate themselves from other groups,³⁹ this psychological or "emic" approach to the question of ethnic identity seems to be more crucial.

For instance, the Pingwu "Tibetans" on the border between Sichuan and Gansu faced an identity crisis and became confused by the problem of their ethnic identity. Before 1949, social discrimination and political persecution due to different factors had forced many of the Pingwu "Tibetans" to change their names or even attach themselves to a large Tibetan tribe in the area of Songpan in Sichuan province, and they were henceforth referred to as "Xifans," meaning "west barbarians." During the 1951 registration the Northern Sichuan Administrative Office identified them as "Tibetans" in terms of the information from the upper strata of the local people as an expedient practice; but the Pingwu "Tibetans" themselves have never accepted it wholeheartedly. For instance, during the celebration of the National Day of the People's Republic 1959, a woman attendant from the Pingwu "Tibetans" was introduced to Chairman Mao Ze-dong, who asked her about her nationality. She was too excited to say anything, and just wept. Although somebody had answered Mao's question for her on that occasion, the Pingwu "Tibetans" themselves began to consider seriously

whether the name "Tibetan" is suitable and correct for them.⁴⁰

In fact, the Tibetans of other areas did not regard the Pingwu "Tibetans" as Tibetans but addressed them as "Xifans," a term the Pingwu "Tibetans" considered very insulting. Culturally the difference between the Pingwu language and the Tibetan one is greater than those among the various Tibetan dialects. They are more simple than the Tibetans in their religious beliefs without a single deity but instead a fetishism of the sun, moon, rocks, mountains, and rivers. Although Lamaism has spread to some of their areas, it has not become popular. In short, neither the Tibetans nor the Pingwu "Tibetans" themselves regard the Pingwu "Tibetans" as Tibetans.⁴¹ However, a final solution for entitling the Pingwu "Tibetans" to separate nationality status was vetoed by a senior Tibetan member in the State Commission of Nationality Affairs in order to maintain the Tibetan nationality's "integrity" as a whole.

The case of the Samei in Yunnan is another example of this identity problem upon which an extensive series of field studies was conducted between 1980 and 1983 by the writer. In 1980 the group had a population of about 15,000, of whom 8,807 were concentrated in the Ala Commune, located in the eastern rural area outside Kunming. Officially this group was identified as a subgroup of the Yi, with a language classified as the Yi Branch, of the Tibeto-Burmese Family in the Sino-Tibetan Stock.⁴² As the writer did his first fieldwork among the Samei, the local authorities reminded him again and again that the Samei would be better off classified as Yi or a branch (zhi-xi) of the Yi group and should never be formally referred to as Samei, a popular name, in any publication. However, they did not give detailed reasons why this group should not be formally called Samei. This made for confusion on the part of the present writer. After a series of long, intensive and open-ended

interviews with several Samei informants concerning their own opinions on the work of identification and classification, some important factors underlying the complex situation began to emerge. A statement given by an informant from the writer's field notes is worthy of being cited in this respect:

We are not the Lolo (a popular name for the Yi). We are Samei. Lolo is an insulting term used by the Han to discriminate against weak minorities. People say that the Lolo inhabit Da-liang-shan (Great Liang Mountain) in Sichuen. I don't know. We have nothing to do with the Lolo. I don't know where they are. We have never had contact with them. Although we are regarded as Yi by the Central People's Government, we don't know where the other Yis are. We Samei want to be regarded as a separate nationality, but we are unable to achieve it. Even the neighboring Sani and Zi-qun are different from us. They are regarded as Yi too by the authorities. Our customs are different from theirs⁴³

Obviously, there is no one cohesive force among the so-called different Yi subgroups, classified together by the government ethnic identification, due to their separate locations and divergent life-ways as well as the lack of intra-ethnic communication and common psychological makeup, all of which are Stalin's criteria for defining a nationality.⁴⁴ Both the cases of the Pingwu "Tibetans" and Samei show the government's ethnic identification to be an "etic" approach, which seems to be conventional, expedient, arbitrary, or even against Stalin's criteria which the CCP have often asserted that they follow.

While in the field, the writer tried to collect the Samei's folk-tales and songs for analysis in order to investigate significant

psychological phenomena, that are projected in "secondary institutions" as psychological anthropologist Kardiner defined.⁴⁵ One of the most interesting findings is that the Samei strongly worry about the Han's encroachment on their ethnic identity. On the one hand they appreciated the Chinese traditional civil examination system very much; to the point that they even had a fantasy that some Samei could pass the civil examination and become high officials; while on the other hand there are many themes relating to confrontation and war against the Han people, with final victory due to their God's standing on the Samei's side. Although the Samei have integrated many of the Han's important festivals into their own seasonal calendar such as the Mid-Autumn Festival, they firmly retained and fervently celebrated their own, such as the Torch Festival in June and the Worm King Festival in July, to honor mythical worms for their protection of the Samei from Han abuse; as well as rejecting other Han customs such as foot-binding, concubine system, and opium-smoking in order to maintain their own ethnic identity during the past.

Except for psychological factors such as the insulting terms like Lolo (the epithet of the Chinese character for Lolo means dog) and Xifan (literally, western barbarian) and their own consciousness of ethnic identity, there are factors involving social and economic benefits for being identified as separate nationalities. For instance, the minorities' 1953 population was roughly 7.14 percent of China's total, but among the 1,050 representatives of the National People's Congress 150 vacancies or 14.28 percent of the total number were reserved for the minorities. Although the number of representatives for each minority nationality in that congress was allocated by the government according to population size and distribution, in principle each separate nationality must have at least one or more representatives.⁴⁶ Therefore, if the Samei group

were identified as a separate nationality but not a subgroup of the Yi, they could have some congress representatives and their social status would be very much improved. As a separate nationality, they could more easily have access to government's financial and material aid. According to a 1953 document, more than 1,300,000 metal agricultural tools were distributed to poor peasants of the minority nationalities in Southwest China; and the money expended for minority education in the same year was six times more than that of 1951.⁴⁷ In addition, there would also be more chances for the Samei people to be recruited into the People's Liberation Army and to be appointed as cadres in the local Democratic Coalition Government,⁴⁸ as well as admitted into colleges for nationalities from which graduates could be expected to take high and middle-rank positions in charge of political, economic, and cultural affairs in national autonomous areas.⁴⁹ Above all, a Samei written language could be created in accordance with a decree issued by the State Council in 1954.⁵⁰ Since language was a barrier standing between the minorities and official or judicial affairs which were conducted in the Han language in pre-1949 China, even to the point that a peasant litigant of the Lisu nationality in Pijiang County, Yunnan Province, paid a sum equivalent to the price of a cow to get a clerk just to write out a complaint for him in the Han language.⁵¹ During the Kuomintang period the use of native languages actually was forbidden in schools located in some minority areas of Yunnan. For instance, in the Naxi and Bai areas, students heard speaking native language could be fined a sum in proportion to the length of their conversation, or even be caned.⁵²

Another case related to the problem of ethnic identification and classification is that of a group identified as "Miao" living in Hainan. Having been already assimilated into the local Han Chinese community, a small group of the Hainanese aborigines was first identified as Yao by

the government due to their history and residual cultural, left-overs. Subsequently, it proposed to entitle them to minority status with special socio-economic benefits as well as the same political and educational privileges as those of other minorities. However, this group angrily rejected the government's offer and did not want to recover their original ethnicity. In other words, they wanted to remain identified as Han Chinese, the most populous group in China, or be identified as Miao, also a very populous group. This is probably a psychological problem related to their bitter experience as a minority people in a society dominated by the Han Chinese.

A positive reaction to ethnic identification and classification was shown by minorities who had been identified as separate nationalities, such as the Miao, Yi, Tong, Zhuang, Tujia and Hui in Western Hunan, and were full of enthusiasm about their newly recognized nationality status which they showed by giving a warm welcome to the Minority Nationalities Visiting team that included scholars, officials, cadres, and performers, sent by the Central People's Government to comfort and entertain minorities as well as to investigate into local realities and problems. Subsequently, in order to strengthen their nationality status and improve their socio-economic position some minorities submitted very demanding proposals to this team as follows:⁵³

1. In addition to all the levels of governments and congresses, organizations such as local peasant committees and the Communist Youth League (CYL) should include minority nationality members by quota. More cadres of minority origins should be trained and recruited for a gradual substitution of the Han cadres.
2. To promote harmony and solidarity among the different nationalities, Han's fraud and discrimination against the minorities should be

prohibited as soon as possible.

3. Priority should be given to minority nationality members to attend school and in joining the CYL and CCP. More scholarships should be allocated to minority students.

4. In the minority areas nationalities primary schools should be established for teaching minority pupils by native teachers using local native languages, and so on.

All those problems cannot be solved overnight. As one writer pointed out, due to its radical ideology in the early years of the PRC, the CCP even exacerbated the problems of China's minorities.⁵⁴ For instance, Chang Xuan, the vice president of the Northwest College for Nationalities, emphasized the Communist dogmatism that only indoctrinated poorly qualified students with historical materialism. As a result, the students knew neither policy nor theory surrounding minority nationality problems. To some students, capitalism is nothing but "pearl, cornelian plus musk." Regarding important categories of historical materialism, some students even took "productive power" and "relationship of production" as "the relationship between Miss Wang Xiu-luan and her mother-in-law."⁵⁵ Even worse is the situation in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, where in 1957, some Mongolians using the tactic "of using the red flag against the red flag" in order to attain Marxist-Leninist tenets of national equality tried to assert that it was correct to exclude the Han Chinese from the region, or to have Inner Mongolia split into distinct Mongol and Han Chinese zones. If this demand was not met, then they desired to secede from China altogether. Furthermore, they were firmly opposed to the use of the Han Chinese language in Inner Mongolia.⁵⁶ At that time the CCP was caught in a dilemma and, therefore, often reiterated the slogan of the two anti's, i.e., anti-great Han Chauvinism and anti-parochial nationalism.

V. Discussion

Although the topic of ethnic studies is a recurrent theme in anthropological literature, there are few common opinions on the constituents of ethnic groups and the nature of boundaries between them. It is relatively easy to discuss this topic in theory, but for a state like China, in which the word "nationality" is institutionalized as the basic unit of its socio-political system, it is imperative to find out some empirical, discernible demarcation and observable criteria for defining a group as a nationality or as a subgroup of another nationality. Since ethnic identity is closely associated with a culturally specific set of value standards, it follows that there are circumstances where such an identity can be moderately successfully realized and limits beyond which such success is precluded. In other words, different circumstances favor different performances (Barth 1969: 24-45).⁵⁷ This is why the concept of ethnic entity is considered as a diverging hierarchic form which may consist of subdivisions and secondary subdivisions (Arutinunov and Bromley, 1978:11).⁵⁸ One ethnologist even considers that ethnicity as a social phenomenon is an ever-changing historical process and therefore we should be prepared to make work of ethnic identification and classification follow particular circumstances (Chu 1982[11]:37).⁵⁹ This is contrary to Stalin's definition of "nation" as a "stable community of people" (see p.8). Stalin's dichotomization of narodnost (nationality) in precapitalist formations and natsiya (nation) in the era of developed capitalism as well as later socialism (see p.8), provoked Chinese minority groups and created great confusion among them due to fear of being named "bu-ze" (literally, tribe), the Chinese translation of Stalin's word for "nationality". The CCP is in a dilemma, whether to follow its dogmatic of the past or to search

painfully for solutions to long-standing grievances. During the past three decades, the government's minority policy as well as its work in identification and classification of ethnic groups swung between two political extremes. At one extreme, the radicals even declared "socialism is already here now, so why should we concern ourselves with nationalities?" and proceeded to try to wipe out all things branded as "national" as they did in the Cultural Revolution.⁶⁰ On the other side, the pragmatists in command of the CCP stressed national autonomy, freedom of religious belief and preservation of national heritage, as they have done since the fall of the Gang of Four,⁶¹ even though they still insist on Marxism-Leninism as the only legitimate national belief system.

One can find that the CCP has also faced difficulties both in the theoretical and in the practical field. With regard to the criteria of nationality or the constituents of ethnicity and the ethnic identification work, anthropologist Despres has pointed out:⁶²

That prevailing conceptions of ethnicity are perhaps too ambiguous in their overall construction ... They (ethnic phenomena) simultaneously engage elements that tend to be conceptualized differently in reference to the analysis of cultural systems, organized groups, and individual transactions. Unless these elements are ordered within some more systematic and inclusive theoretical framework, it will be difficult to derive and comparatively establish generalizations.

Furthermore, in the development of multi-ethnic society, within the same group, people must surely pursue different patterns of economic life and institutionalize different forms of behavior when faced with the different opportunities offered in different environments.⁶³ All of these factors make Stalin's four criteria -- common language, territory,

economic life and psychological traits -- for defining a nationality seem oversimplified and, thus, out of the question. On one hand there are cases in which people strongly claim the status of separate nationality, instead of those ascribed by the government, as in the following cases:⁶⁴

Generally known as	Officially identified as	Location	Identifying themselves as
1) Samei Lolo	a subgroup of the Yi	Kunming, Yunnan	Samei
2) Lingao	a subgroup of the Yao	Lingao, Guangdong	Han
3) Yao	a subgroup of the Yao	Hainan, Guangdong	Miao
4) Pingwu or Baima Tibetan	a subgroup of the Tibetan	Pingwu, Gansu	Bei
5) Mishimi, Digam Midzu	unidentified	Zayü, Tibet	Deng
6) Kutzung	a subgroup of the Lahu	Yuanjiang, Yunnan	Kutzung

On the other hand, there are also cases in which a nationality that has been officially defined does not inhabit a common territory but is scattered over discontinuous areas, not pursue a common economic life but has different patterns of subsistence, does not speak a common language but different mutually unintelligible dialects and/or does not have a common psychological make-up but contains different characteristics. As an example, the Mongols of Yunnan are the descendants of an army led by Kubilai Khan who invaded China through Yunnan in the thirteenth century. As a result of assimilation, they no longer use their Mongolian language at all but have adopted the Han or the Yi language from local neighboring groups. Instead of pastoralism and nomadism on dry land, their major means of subsistence is agriculture, with fishing as supplementary. They have changed many of their traditional customs, including their belief

system which has been supplanted by new ones, but nevertheless they still strongly insist on their Mongolian identity.⁶⁵ This illustrates clearly that nationality as a social phenomenon is so complicated that it cannot be defined simply by political dogmatism and thus should not be subsumed into resolution by bureaucratic or administrative processes. China's experiences accumulated during the past three decades may teach them a very significant lesson for the future.

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4. Guo-jia min-wei, op.cit., p. 64.
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6. Moseley, G., Ibid., Appendix C, cited from The Important Documents of the First Plenary Session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1949).
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13. Moseley, G., op.cit., 1966, p. 35.
14. Ya, Han-chang, op.cit., p.4.
15. Chang, Lu, "Guan-yu min-zu yi-ci di shi-yong he fan-yi qing-kuang" (The Situation Related to the Use and Translation of the Term 'Min-zu', Min-zu tuan-jie, 1962, No.7, p.37; Ya, Han-chang, Ibid., pp. 5-6; Editorial Board, "'Min-zu' yi-ci di yi-min tong-yi wen-ti di tao-lun" "A Discussion on the Problem of Unifying the Translation of the Term Nation/Nationality), Min-zu tuan-jie, 1962, No.7, pp. 38-39.

16. Moseley, G., "China's Fresh Approach to the National Minority Question," *The China Quarterly*, 1965, No. 24, pp. 20-21.
17. Ya, Han-chang, *op.cit.*, pp. 5-6; Moseley, G., *op.cit.*, 1966, p. 35.
18. Ya, Han-chang, *Ibid.*, p.7.
19. Moseley, G., *op.cit.*, 1965, p. 21.
20. For instance, Jing Tong considers that the translation of the Russian word (Narodnost, nationality) into Chinese bu-zu (tribe) is correct and acceptable, but Ya Han-chang insists that it should be translated into Chinese min-zu (nation), just as the translation of the Russian word "Natsiya" (nation). See Jing, Tong, "Guan-yu min-zu yi-ci di kai-nian wen-ti" (The Problem Related to the Concept of Nation), *Min-zu yan-jiu*, 1980, No.4, p.12; Ya, Han-chang, "Lun min-zu" (On the Concept of Nation), *Min-zu yan-jiu*, 1982, No.5, pp. 4-5.
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28. Heaton, W.R., "The Chinese People's Liberation Army and Minority Nationalities," *Journal of Asian Affairs*, Vol.3, No.2, p. 98.

29. The State Commission on Nationality Affairs, *op.cit.*, 1979, pp. 40-43; Li, Wei-han, *Tong-yi zhan-xian yu min-zu wen-ti* (The United Front Work and the Nationality Problems) (Beijing, 1981), pp. 511-512.
30. Schwarz, H.G., *op. cit.*, pp. 170-171.
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32. *Ibid.*, p. 38; Schwarz, H.G., *op.cit.*, pp. 172-173.
33. The State Commission of Nationality Affairs, *op.cit.*, 1979, pp. 38-39; Editorial Group, (ed.), *Min-zu wen-ti yu min-zu zheng-ce* (Nationality Problem and Nationality Policy) (Chengdu, 1980), pp. 41-49.
34. Yan, Xue-qun, "Zhong-guo min-zu yu-wen zheng-ce he jiao-yu" (Chinese Policy on the Language and Education of National Minorities), *Zhong-yin yu-wen jiao-xue*, 1983, Vol.II, No. 2, p. 12.
35. The State Commission of Nationality Affairs, *op.cit.*, 1979, pp. 38-39. According to the same source, only the Beijing Nationality Press during the period of 1953-1979 had published 83.35 million volumes of books in native languages.
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38. Fei, Xiao-tong, *op.cit.*, 1981, pp. 72-74.

39. De Vos, G., *Ethnic Identity* (Palo Alto, California, 1975), pp. 16-17.
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41. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
42. The State Commission of Nationality Affairs, 1981, *op.cit.*, Appendix 1.
43. The Sani and Zi-qun also are identified as the Yi's subgroups. The former is located in the Lu-nan Autonomous County and the latter, in the east suburban area of Kunming.
44. See Chapter III, Note 4.
45. Kardiner, A., *The Individual and His Society* (New York, 1939), pp. 471-472.
46. Ren-min chu-ban-she (the People's Press), *op.cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 8-12.
47. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 15-16.
48. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 67-68. According to a decree issued by the State Council in 1952, national autonomous areas established on the basis of one large minority nationality and several small ones, or on the basis of a number of minority nationalities with nearly equal size of populations should have "Democratic Nationality Coalition Government" including cadres from all of their nationalities.
49. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 9-10. See the purposes for establishing the Central College of Nationalities stated in a decree issued by the State Council in 1950.
50. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 100-103.
51. Fu, Mao-chi, "Chinese Speak in Divers Tongues," *People's China*, 1955, No. 6, pp. 16-19.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

53. Zhong-nan ren-min chu-ban-she (The Central-South People's Press), *Jie-fan liao di zhong-nan-qu xiong-di min-zu* (The Liberated Brotherly Nationalities in the Central-South Area) (Hankou, 1951), pp. 8-11.
54. Liu, Yu-luek, *Zhong-gong zen-yang dui-dai shao-shu min-zu* (How Does the CCP Treat the Minority Nationalities) (Hong Kong, 1953), pp. 27-28.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 29. "Pearl, cornelian plus mask" means wealth richness plus luxury, and "the relationship between Miss Wang Xiu-luan and her mother-in-law" implies that the relationship is a contradictory one.
56. Ghosh, S., *Embers in Cathay* (Garden City, N.Y., 1961), p. 138.

57. Barth, F. ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Boston, Little, Brown and Co., 1969), pp. 24-25.
58. Arutiunov, S.A. and Yu, V. Bromley, "Problems of Ethnicity in Soviet Ethnographic Studies." In R.E. Holloman and S.A. Arutinunov eds., *Perspectives on Ethnicity* (The Hague, Mouton, 1978), pp. 11. For example, the Ukrainians as a nation are a hierarchic ethnic entity, consisting of the subdivisions, such as the Gutsuls, and secondary sub-divisions, such as the Lemki, etc.
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60. The State Commission of Nationality Affairs, 1979, op.cit., p. 66.
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63. Barth, 1969, op.cit., p. 12.
64. Informations related to Case 1 were collected by the author in the field; Cases 2 and 3, personally from a researcher in Guangdong; and Cases 4, 5 and 6, from Fei, Xiao-tong (Hsiao-tung), *Min-zu yu she-hui* (Nationality and Society) (Beijing, 1981b), pp. 21-31.
65. *Yunnan li-shi yan-jiu-suo* (Yunnan Institute of Historical Studies), *Yunnan shao-shu min-zu* (Minority Nationalities in Yunnan), (Kunming, 1983), pp. 556-560.

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