

13

MINORITIES

The minorities make up 8.4 percent of the population (2000 census). They are divided into 55 officially recognized groups whose status is protected by the Constitution and other legislation. Equality, unity, and common prosperity are the fundamental objectives of the Government in handling relations between ethnic groups.

Regional autonomy for minorities

According to the Constitution:

All ethnic groups in the People's Republic of China are equal. The state protects the lawful rights and interests of the ethnic minorities and upholds and develops a relationship of equality, unity and mutual assistance among all of China's ethnic groups. Discrimination against oppression of any ethnic group is prohibited; any act which undermines the unity of the ethnic groups or instigates division is prohibited.

Moreover, the Constitution states that:

The state assists areas inhabited by ethnic minorities in accelerating their economic and cultural development according to the characteristics and needs of the various ethnic minorities.

The Constitution provides for autonomous regions and areas for minorities. In the Western Region, there are five autonomous regions (level 2 government) and 99 autonomous areas (lower levels of government).

There has been considerable debate about the meaning of "autonomy," given the complex history of interaction between the majority Han and the minorities. As the Preamble to the Constitution puts it:

...It is necessary to combat big-ethnic chauvinism, namely Han chauvinism, and to combat local ethnic chauvinism. The state will do its utmost to promote the common prosperity of the ethnic groups.

The Government has attempted to adopt measures that respect the needs and sensitivities of the minorities and has preferential minority policies. PRC has made effort to study minority cultures and preserve large bodies of written material in minority languages. It is important to distinguish between

the different minorities. While all have equal status, their impact on the modernization of the PRC is far from equal. Moreover, the modernization process has affected each minority differently. For these reasons, the PRC's position in 2020 will be influenced more by some minorities than others. This chapter therefore pays special attention to Xinjiang and its predominant minority, the Uygur.¹ However, comparisons with other minorities and other provinces will demonstrate a variety of circumstances within the Western Region.

Social and economic conditions of minorities

The PRC's minorities differ from the majority Han population in economy, society, and habitat.

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

The minorities fall into three broad groups depending on the stage they have reached in the process of demographic transition. Transitional populations are those that have achieved sufficient economic development to bring down the level of mortality, especially infant mortality. As a result, their fertility has also declined and longevity (life expectancy at birth) is high. The percentage of the population under the age of 15 is relatively small and that of adults over 65 years relatively large.

Pretransitional populations, in contrast, are those whose socioeconomic development is still too low to bring about any major changes in the demographic structure. Typically, they have high mortality (especially infant mortality), high fertility, and low longevity. Their age structures show a youthful population with only a small percentage of adults over the age of 65 years.

Thus, we can distinguish between three groups of minorities (Table 13-2):

- *Group 1:* the Koreans, Hui, and Manchu, all of which share the demographic characteristics of the Han

Table 13-1 Minorities in the Autonomous Regions, 1999

Minority	Xinjiang	Ningxia	Inner Mongolia	Guangxi	Tibet	PRC (1990) ^a
Daur			73,818			121,463
Dong				311,828		2,508,624
Han	6,871,528	3,537,134	18,655,000	28,448,326	70,145	1,039,190,000
Hui	792,698	1,865,903	210,000	28,184	2,098	8,612,001
Kazak	1,304,518					1,110,758
Kirgiz	166,325					143,537
Koreans			23,825			1,923,361
Manchu	21,192		460,000		190	9,846,776
Miao				443,126	117	7,383,622
Mongol	161,251		3,828,000		83	4,802,407
Tajik	40,099					33,233
Tibetan					2,388,009	4,593,072
Uygur	8,250,236				4	7,207,024
Yao				1,412,585		2,137,033
Zhuang				15,288,933	48	15,555,820
Others	142,203	29,854	44,757	797,018	16,501	26,340,901
Total	17,750,000	5,432,891	23,295,400	46,750,000	2,477,195	1,130,510,000
<i>Main minority as % of total</i>	46.5%	34.3%	16.4%	32.7%	96.4%	
<i>Han as % of total</i>	38.7%	65.1%	80.1%	60.9%	2.8%	91.9%

Source: Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook 2000, Inner Mongolia Statistical Yearbook 2000, Ningxia Statistical Yearbook 2000, Guangxi Statistical Yearbook 1999, Tibet Statistical Yearbook 2000
^a At the time of writing, 2000 census numbers for the various minorities were not available.

Table 13-2 Demographic Characteristics of the Three Main Minority Groups, 1990

Group	Longevity			Infant Mortality Rates (‰)			Age Structure (%)		Intermarriage Rate (%)
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Under 15	65++	
Group 1									
Han	68.7	72.3	70.5	22.9	27.0	24.8	27.1	5.7	n.a.
Manchu	70.7	73.6	72.0	15.0	14.5	14.8	30.8	4.1	n.a.
Hui	69.0	72.4	70.6	33.0	30.5	31.8	32.0	4.5	21.1
Korean	64.1	71.0	67.6	19.4	19.3	19.4	24.7	4.6	11.1
Group 2									
Miao	63.6	65.2	64.4	55.7	58.7	57.2	34.8	4.1	39.2
Mongol	62.5	68.2	66.4	27.3	25.8	26.6	35.8	3.1	52.1
Dai	62.5	67.2	64.8	78.4	67.4	73.0	33.6	4.5	32.6
Group 3									
Uygur	63.2	63.7	63.4	82.6	68.7	75.8	39.4	4.8	1.0
Kazak	61.0	64.4	62.6	52.2	44.3	48.4	43.1	2.6	7.5
Tibetan	59.6	63.6	61.7	86.7	73.4	80.4	35.9	4.8	8.3
Kirgiz	61.0	60.6	61.0	103.3	95.8	99.5	44.0	4.2	n.a.
PRC	68.4	71.9	70.1	25.5	29.4	27.3	27.7	5.6	n.a.

Source: Attane and Courbage (2000), Table 2, p. 263; intermarriage rates from Tian Qing (1999).

Table 13-3 Crude Birth Rates and Death Rates for Minorities in Xinjiang, 1999

Local Government	Majority	Han			Minority		
		Birth Rate (%)	Death Rate (%)	Natural Increase (%)	Birth Rate (%)	Death Rate (%)	Natural Increase (%)
City							
Urumqi	Han	8.10	3.37	4.73	10.15	3.79	6.37
Shihezi	Han	9.65	4.38	5.27	17.04	3.59	13.45
Turpan	Uygur	10.08	3.45	6.64	10.85	1.95	8.90
Artux	Uygur	16.44	2.03	14.42	13.31	4.14	9.17
Kashgar	Uygur	13.35	4.09	9.44	11.27	3.07	8.20
County							
Qitai	Han	10.44	4.02	6.42	14.89	4.12	10.76
Taxkorgan	Tajik	8.36	n.a.	8.36	18.34	5.03	13.31
Fuyun	Kazak	9.67	2.67	7.01	15.63	3.88	11.75
Xinyuan	Kirgiz	13.10	3.32	9.78	16.01	2.74	13.27
Hejing	Mongol	8.19	3.60	4.58	12.74	3.82	8.92
Kuche	Uygur, north	7.78	3.17	4.60	14.75	6.51	8.24
Moyu	Uygur, south	8.06	2.44	5.62	19.03	7.47	11.56

Source: Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook 2000.

- *Group 2:* the Miao, Dai, and Mongols, minorities whose demographic transition has started
- *Group 3:* the Uygur, Tibetans, Kazaks, and Kirgiz, minorities whose demographic characteristics are pre-transitional—high death rates, high birth rates and very youthful populations

Other factors distinguish the three groups. Groups 1 and 2 are highly Sinicized, meaning that close association with the Han has led to some cultural and social affinities. Partly this has to do with their location—either closer to Beijing or scattered across the PRC and therefore less culturally cohesive and distinct. The demographic evidence in Table 13-2 is only one indicator of their cultural proximity to the Han, for their fertility patterns reflect those of the Han despite the fact that family planning policies have treated all minorities leniently and have not insisted on the one-child norm.²

The minorities in Group 3 represent a very different case. These are the minorities that:

- Are the least Sinicized and most remote from Beijing
- Have historical and cultural traditions that are relatively cohesive and distinctive (low interethnic marriage rates)
- Are geographically concentrated
- Are located in the border regions

Reinforcing this conclusion are the differences between rural and urban minority populations. Minority populations in rural areas have much higher

crude birth rates and crude death rates than minority populations in cities (Table 13-3).

Of the demographically distinct minorities (Uygur, Tibetan, Kazak, and Kirgiz) the Uygur are the most numerous—some 8 million. Development planners for the Western Region should give the Uygur minority special consideration for the following reasons:

- The Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region accounts for one-sixth of the area of the PRC.
- The Uygur account for 45 percent of the population of Xinjiang.
- Xinjiang has a very long international border—some 5,500 km—which it shares with six countries: Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, and Russia.
- Many border populations share Islamic beliefs with groups across the border, relationships that can be of great benefit or, if misunderstood, have the potential to bring disorder and grief.
- Xinjiang has a prospective major role in the PRC's energy sector (Chapter 7).

No other minority group in the PRC represents such important economic, political, and cultural considerations. In 1949, the Uygur formed 76 percent of Xinjiang's population and the Han, about 7 percent. By 1978, the Han proportion had risen to 41.6 percent, partly through inward Han migration and partly through outward migration of minorities to the Soviet Union at the time of the I-Ta incident in 1962.³

In no other part of the PRC has the demographic balance changed so radically. Inner Mongolia has also received much inward migration, but Mongols have remained much the same percentage of the population since the 1940s: 14.8 percent in 1947, 10.7 percent in 1974, 12.9 percent in 1982, 13.5 percent in 1984, and 16.4 percent in 1999.⁴

Since 1978 the proportions of Han and Uygur in Xinjiang have also remained much the same, although the proportion of Han is lower than in 1978 (Table 13-4).

It seems that the higher rate of natural increase among the minority populations is balancing the inflow of Han migrants. Also, there is probably a bigger outflow of Han from Xinjiang to other parts of the PRC than of minorities for reasons of language and family ties.

ECONOMY

The economic development of the autonomous areas has generally been slower than in the rest of the PRC. However, there are some exceptions, one of which is described at the end of this section.

GDP

Between 1990 and 1999, the GDP of the autonomous regions grew at an annual average rate of 18.6 percent as compared with 19.9 percent in the rest of the PRC. However, the population growth rate was faster in the autonomous regions, so the growth rate of GDP per capita averaged 18.1 percent as against 19.5 percent. In 1999, the GDP per capita in autonomous regions was only 5,042 yuan as against 7,418 yuan in the rest of the PRC.

These aggregate figures conceal differences within provinces and autonomous regions. For example, in Sichuan over the same period the economic growth rate of the autonomous areas was much slower than that of the rest of the province (Figure 13-1).

Poverty

The rural populations of the autonomous regions all have much lower incomes than the rural

Table 13-4 Xinjiang Population, by Minority, 1978–1999

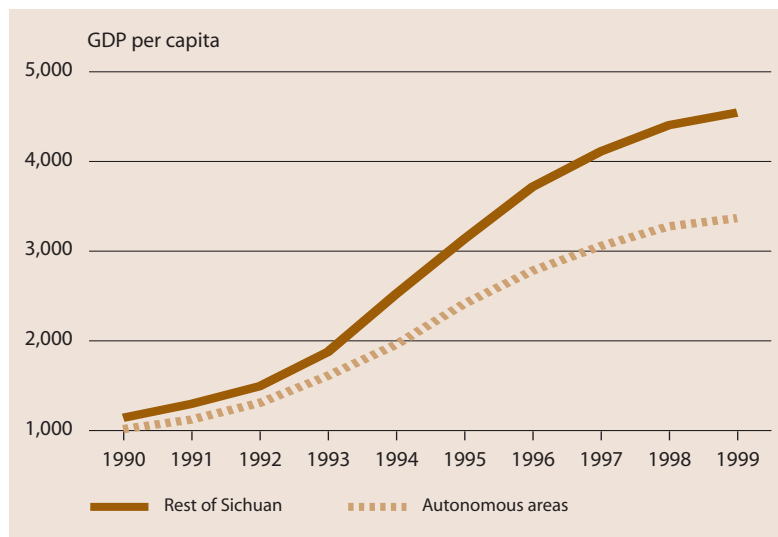
Ethnic Group	1978 (millions)	1980 (millions)	1985 (millions)	1990 (millions)	1995 (millions)	1999 (millions)
Uygur	5.56	5.76	6.29	7.25	7.80	8.25
	45.1%	44.9%	46.2%	47.4%	46.9%	46.5%
Han	5.13	5.31	5.35	5.75	6.32	6.87
	41.6%	41.4%	39.3%	37.6%	38.0%	38.7%
Kazak	0.82	0.88	0.99	1.14	1.24	1.30
	6.7%	6.8%	7.3%	7.4%	7.4%	7.3%
Hui	0.53	0.57	0.60	0.69	0.75	0.79
	4.3%	4.4%	4.4%	4.5%	4.5%	4.5%
Kirgiz	0.10	0.11	0.12	0.14	0.16	0.17
	0.8%	0.8%	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%
Mongol	0.11	0.11	0.12	0.14	0.15	0.16
	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%
Others	0.09	0.10	0.13	0.18	0.20	0.20
	0.7%	0.7%	1.0%	1.2%	1.2%	1.1%
Total	12.33	12.83	13.61	15.29	16.61	17.75
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook 2000.

population of the PRC as a whole. The incidence of poverty is greatest in Tibet and Xinjiang, which each have about 30 percent of their rural population living below the \$1.08/day level, and about 20 percent below the 625 yuan level (Figure 13-2).

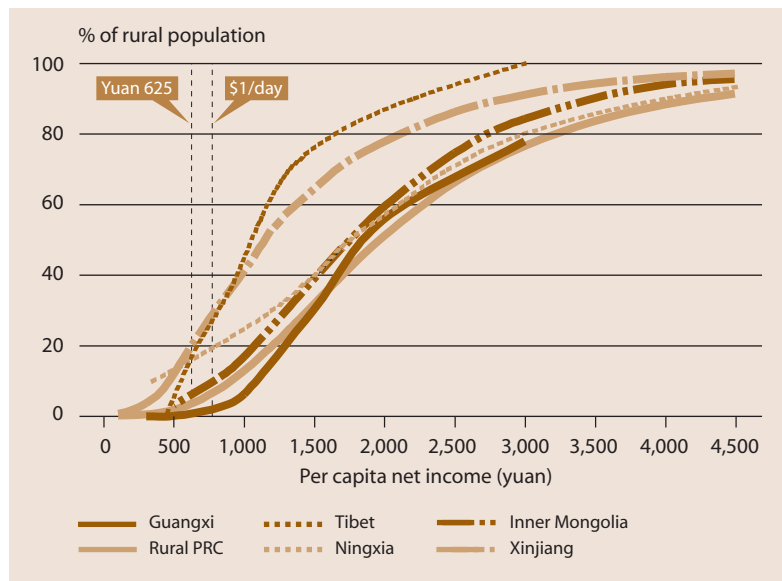
Within the autonomous regions, the minorities have much lower average incomes than the Han population. In Xinjiang, for example, there is a correlation between the percentage of a county

Figure 13-1 Growth of GDP Per Capita in Autonomous Areas of Sichuan Province, 1990–2000



Source: Calculated by consultants from Sichuan Statistical Yearbook 2000.

Figure 13-2 Rural Income Distribution in Minority Autonomous Regions of the PRC, 1999



Source: Calculated by consultants from the statistical yearbooks of the autonomous regions.

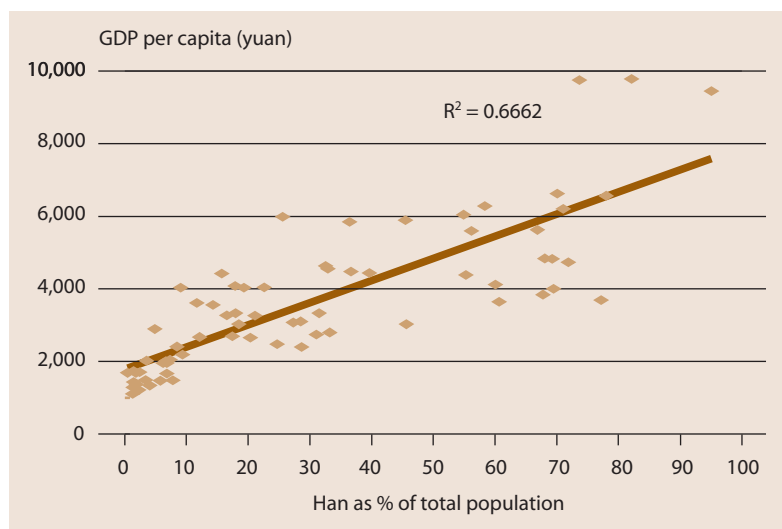
population that is Han and the average GDP per capita. Most poor counties have a minority population at least 90 percent of the total (Figure 13-3).

Minority participation in the nonagricultural labor force

Article 23 of the Regional National Autonomy Law of 2001 states:

When recruiting personnel, enterprises and institutions in the national autonomous areas shall give priority to minority nationalities and may enlist them from the population of minority nationalities in rural and pastoral areas.

Figure 13-3 GDP Per Capita Correlated with Percentage of Han Population, Xinjiang Counties, 1999



Source: Calculated by consultants from *Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook 2000*.

Recent figures for Xinjiang indicate lower and declining minority participation in urban employment. In particular, the minorities' share of urban employment declined from 28 percent in 1990 to 20 percent in 1999 (Table 13-5).

The lack of occupational diversification among the minorities of Xinjiang is cause for concern for the following reasons:

- It indicates that there are some factors such as language and education that affect the employment of minorities in the urban sector.
- People from other provinces come to Xinjiang to work, and some Xinjiang people, especially those who are well educated, go to the Eastern and Central regions to find jobs.
- Over the next few years, large numbers of young people from minority groups will join the workforce (see Figure 11-1) but with little hope of finding employment.

The aggregate figures hide significant regional variations. The Uygur of Turpan, for example, have achieved relative prosperity from a commercially viable grape industry. They dominate the industry in all its aspects and employ temporary, migrant labor to do the most backbreaking and menial work including cleaning the irrigation wells. Migrant workers from Gansu and Anhui, for example, are desperately poor and willing to work at tasks that the local Uygur shun.⁵ The Uygur of Turpan have come to realize that their economic position is one of relative prosperity and this has given rise to ethnic pride and a consciousness of achievement relative to the poor, itinerant Han, who are described locally as "self-drifters." Since 1987, about 250,000 self-drifters have come to Xinjiang each year, attracted by the perceived work opportunities and the relative ease of life in such small things as the provision of winter heating in houses.⁶ Turpan is relatively prosperous, and governments at all levels have made efforts to promote the cultural achievements of the Uygur, and recognize their tourist potential. More importantly, Turpan illustrates what is achievable by minorities under the right conditions.

Table 13-5 Full-Time Employees of Minority Nationalities in Xinjiang, 1990 and 1999

Industry	1990			1999		
	Total (thousands)	Minorities (thousands)	%	Total (thousands)	Minorities (thousands)	%
Mining	138	38	27.5	226	42	18.6
Manufacturing	560	106	18.9	529	79	14.9
Production and provision of electricity, gas, water	55	8	15.2	55	13	23.8
Construction	23	27	11.9	235	17	7.3
Geology reconnaissance and water management	78	16	20.1	36	11	29.4
Transportation, storage, and postal and telecommunication services	163	34	20.9	254	28	11.0
Wholesale, retail trade, and catering services	222	73	32.8	713	54	7.6
Finance and insurance	40	15	38.0	54	15	28.0
Real estate	2	1	22.7	9	1	12.4
Social service	48	13	25.8	171	17	10.1
Health, physical education, and social welfare	72	30	41.8	93	42	44.9
Education, cultural arts, film, and TV	240	133	55.2	328	181	55.4
Scientific research and general technology service	29	3	11.0	26	5	18.8
State agencies, party department and social groups	189	81	42.6	247	107	43.4
Others	—	—	—	114	3	2.6
Total	2,062	576	27.9	3,088	615	19.9

Source: Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook 1991 and Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook 2000.

Autonomous areas that have prospered

While the economic development of autonomous areas has generally been slower than in other areas, there are exceptions. Honghe Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan is one example that the Minorities Commission gives; its per capita GDP of 3,422 yuan is well below that of Yunnan (4,442 yuan) but its annual rate of GDP growth has exceeded that of Yunnan (Table 13-6).

Honghe Autonomous Prefecture is located in the south of Yunnan province and borders Viet Nam on the south. The minority population is 44.8 percent of the total population of the prefecture. The total land area is 32,931 km². The prefecture has a complex terrain with high plateaus, mountains, and deep valleys. The climate is subtropical and monsoonal. There are rich mineral resources, especially tin reserves, which are the most important in the PRC; the coal industry is well developed. In short, a

favorable location and natural resource endowment probably account for much of the recent progress of the prefecture.

HABITAT

In the Western Region, the minorities mainly inhabit the mountainous areas. They are predominantly rural populations. Besides the association between poverty counties and environmentally fragile areas ("Poverty and Fragile Ecology" section, Chapter 1), there is an association between minorities and environmentally fragile areas. Population growth in rural areas without migration to the cities has led to minority populations expanding into marginal areas, and settling marginal areas more intensively. The combination of remoteness and adverse environmental conditions makes the economic and social development of many minority populations an especially intractable problem.

Table 13-6 GDP Growth in Honghe Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan

Sector	Yunnan				Honghe			
	1995 (million yuan)	1999 (million yuan)	(% of total)	Annual Increase (%)	1995 (million yuan)	1999 (million yuan)	(% of total)	Annual Increase (%)
Primary	3,052,700	4,121,700	22.2	7.8	282,958	360,273	27.0	6.2
Secondary	5,366,300	8,251,200	44.5	11.4	334,056	571,823	42.9	14.4
Tertiary	3,647,800	6,184,500	33.3	14.1	230,595	401,246	30.1	14.9
Total	12,066,800	18,557,400	100.0	11.4	847,609	1,333,342	100.0	12.0

Source: Yunnan Statistical Yearbook 1996 and 2000.

Participation of minorities in decision making

MINORITY PARTICIPATION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The visibility of minorities in national and regional life is an important way of promoting their wider participation in the socioeconomic development of the PRC. This visibility can be measured in different ways, beginning with a comparison of the representation of minorities in various national organizations and administrative levels. The apex body that looks after minority affairs, the State Ethnic Affairs Commission in Beijing, has good representation: about 52.8 percent relative to the total weight of minorities in the population of the PRC, which is 8.41 percent (Table 13-7).

The visibility of minorities in the People's Liberation Army is also satisfactory, with some six national minority groups being overrepresented relative to their weight in the population (Table 13-8).

Similarly, minority representation in the National People's Congresses and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conferences has been strong (Table 13-9).

With the economic reforms, the role of these legislative bodies has increased with more members refusing to vote for policies that they strongly oppose.⁷ At the national level, the public visibility of the minorities according to these indicators has been good and indeed is greater than what would be predicted from the population of the minorities. This is important because it means that minorities, at least by formal criteria, have some representation in national institutions, and this can be emulated by the rest of the communities.

MINORITY PARTICIPATION AT THE REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL LEVELS

Few studies on the minorities have dealt with the question of representation and participation at the regional level of administration. A study by Wang Zongli et al. concluded that, on average, minority cadres as a percentage of all cadres in the mid-1990s were only about half of what would have been predicted on the basis of the minority share of the population:⁸

- In Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, where minorities compose 33.6 percent of the total population, minority cadres make up only 16.6 percent of all cadres.
- In Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, where minorities compose 62.2 percent of the total population, minority cadres make up only 46.1 percent of all cadres.
- In Qinghai Province, where minorities compose 42.1 percent of the total population, minority cadres make up only 22.1 percent of all cadres.

According to another study, in 1997 there were 639,000 cadres in Xinjiang, excluding central-level cadres living in the province and cadres belonging to the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC). Of these, 312,000, or 49 percent, were from minorities, at a time when the minorities made up

Table 13-7 Representation of Minorities on the Minorities Commission, 2001

Minority	No.	%
Han	76	47.2
Man	10	6.2
Mongol	12	7.5
Hui	11	6.8
Croxian	5	3.1
Zhuang	6	3.7
Tibetan	7	4.3
Pumi	1	0.6
Yi.	8	5.0
Miao	8	5.0
Bai	2	1.2
Tu	2	1.2
Dawol	1	0.6
Kazak	1	0.6
Dong	1	0.6
Tujia	3	1.9
Uygur	2	1.2
Sugo	1	.6
Yao	1	.6
Naxi	1	.6
She	1	.6
Ni	1	.6
Total	161	100

Source: Data supplied by the Personnel Department, State Ethnic Affairs Commission, PRC, July 2001.

about 62 percent of the total population of Xinjiang.⁹

Minority representation among cadres has improved over time. Significantly, the Government itself has been concerned about the shortfall in the minority representation achieved relative to its goals.¹⁰ Minority representation within prefecture and county governments with large minority populations is sometimes limited to second-level positions of executive authority rather than top-level.¹¹

In contrast to what happens at the provincial and prefecture levels, leadership at the village level today does tend to reflect the numerically important minorities in the villages. The Organization Law of the Villagers' Committee of 1998¹² requires that villagers directly elect the chairman, vice chairman, and members of the villagers' committee. The numerically significant minorities tend to vote for someone from their own community, and the Law requires representation of minorities. However, this minority representation may not have much impact because the village committee still functions as the bottom level of a hierarchical system of government policy implementation (Chapter 12). Active minority participation at all levels should be an integral part of poverty alleviation programs.

Language policies as inhibitors of upward mobility

The visibility of minorities in senior positions remains low. This seems to be the consequence of the past lack of job diversification and the use of minority languages as the medium of instruction. There are differences between local governments with respect to language policies. For example, in Yunnan, Chinese is taught at the primary school level, whereas in Xinjiang the Uygur typically attend schools that neglect Chinese language instruction.

Table 13-8 Representation of Minorities in the Army, 1990

Nationality	No. in Army	Percentage of Total Minority Representation in Army	Percentage of PRC's Minority Population
Hui	6,723	15.0	9.4
Zhuang	6,559	14.6	17.0
Uygur	4,756	10.6	7.9
Mongol	4,604	10.3	5.3
Manchu	4,317	9.6	10.8
Miao	3,937	8.8	8.1
Yi	3,041	6.8	7.2
Korean	2,358	5.3	2.1
Tibetan	2,042	4.6	5.0
Bouyei	1,348	3.0	2.8
Others	5,146	11.5	24.4
Total	44,831	100.0	100.0

Source: Mackerras (1994), p. 256.

Note: See the figures for population by nationality, including those in the People's Liberation Army, in State Statistical Bureau (1990), pp. 76–86.

Table 13-9 Minorities Deputies in National People's Congresses and People's Political Consultative Conferences, 1954 and 1998

No. of Deputies	First Congress, 1954	Ninth Congress, 1998	% of Deputies	
			1954	1998
National People's Congresses				
Total	1,226	2,979		
Female	147	650	12	22
Minorities	178	428	15	15
People's Political Consultative Conferences				
Total	198	2,196		
Female	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	
Minorities	19	258	10	12

Source: *Statistical Yearbook 2000*, p. 745.

LANGUAGE POLICY AND EDUCATION IN YUNNAN

A notable characteristic of Yunnan minorities is the emergence of an intelligentsia. In the poverty counties of Luquan and Lancang, for example, there are many senior officials who are the first in their families to become literate and attain tertiary qualifications.¹³

In Lancang County, the strength of Lahu culture is very evident. In the town of Lancang, the Lahu symbol of the *apogu* or *kulu*¹⁴ is prominently displayed on public buildings, in statues and paintings, in street decorations, and in the public gardens. The bilingual language policy in Lancang County involves the use of Lahu language in the first three grades of primary school and then a switch to Chinese instruction from grade 4 onward. This policy

has produced modern Lahu leaders at the township and county level who are very competent in the Chinese language. There is no doubt that this competence has allowed them to achieve rapid upward socioeconomic mobility. The Lahu are typical of those minority groups who have become closely identified with the cultural orientations of the Han. As a result, they feel very comfortable with the rapprochement that has occurred in recent times between the minority language and Chinese.

LANGUAGE POLICY AND EDUCATION IN XINJIANG¹⁵

In Xinjiang there is a different interpretation of bilingual language policy in the schools.¹⁶ In Uygur majority areas, Uygur is the language of schooling from primary school to senior secondary school. In order to proceed to tertiary education students must study Chinese full time for a year or even longer. For example, the best Uygur medical students, those who gain admission to the prestigious Shanghai Medical School, need to study Chinese for a full year in Lanzhou. After they transfer to Shanghai private study in Chinese is essential in order to keep up with lectures. The first six months are exceedingly difficult; a student who cannot keep up will take even longer to complete medical school. It takes a bright Uygur student at least an extra year to complete medical training.¹⁷ In the meantime, an ambitious Han medical student from Xinjiang can surge ahead by concentrating on the English language alone.

There are similar barriers in other parts of the advanced sector of the economy. The lack of minority presence among the employees in the banks and airlines of Xinjiang probably reflects the low level of Chinese language competence. The other consideration is the centralized nature of recruitment into the better jobs. A Uygur student from Aksu seeking employment in, say, the local branch of the PBC and having an appropriate degree would have to apply to the provincial headquarters of the PBC in Urumqi. But even if a vacancy did exist in Aksu, it would not necessarily go to the best applicant

because many SOEs continue to recruit employees from the children of former employees. Thus a third factor inhibiting the employment of a talented Chinese-speaking Uygur student is the pattern of labor recruitment in urban areas, which has tended to favor the Han.

The discrepancy between the educational attainments of the Han and those of the ethnic minorities of Xinjiang is not limited to the tertiary sector (Table 13-10).

In 1990, the proportion of minority male workers who had attended junior and senior high school was roughly half the proportion of Han workers. Table 13-10 also shows that although development has benefited all communities, the educational gap between the Han and the ethnic minorities has increased, not decreased. For example, in 1982 male Han illiterates were roughly a third of the proportion of illiterates among the minorities in the workforce. By 1990, however, that proportion had declined to about one-fifth. Similarly, the mean years of education showed a growing gap between the Han and the ethnic minorities from 1982 to 1990: from 1.6 years to 2.3 years for men, and from 1.3 years to 2.4 years for women. The relatively low educational level of the minority labor force was a key factor that prevented the minorities from achieving greater job diversification.

As economic reforms progress and reliance on market forces increases, the disadvantages and vulnerabilities of the past are likely to get worse unless local governments foster minority advancement in the labor force. Two areas warrant special attention: community participation in the planning and implementation of development policies and projects, and changes in language policies in order to accelerate the acquisition of Chinese language competence by minorities.

There is a major language dilemma: on the one hand, the official language is Chinese; on the other hand, in deference to minority cultures, the Government and legal institutions recognize the need to respect and promote minority languages.

Table 13-10 Educational Qualifications of the Xinjiang Labor Force, by Ethnic Group and Sex, 1982 and 1990

Level of Education	1982				1990			
	Men		Women		Men		Women	
	Han (%)	Minority (%)	Han (%)	Minority (%)	Han (%)	Minority (%)	Han (%)	Minority (%)
Postsecondary	2.8	1.2	1.3	0.7	7.0	3.3	4.4	1.5
University					1.3	1.2	0.4	0.5
Junior college					5.8	2.1	4.0	1.0
Senior high school	12.8	7.7	10.5	5.0	24.9	12.8	26.5	11.1
Academic					19.5	7.8	19.9	6.2
Technical					5.5	5.0	6.6	4.9
Junior high school	36.8	20.6	28.0	13.6	48.3	25.6	41.2	19.8
Primary school	38.0	41.1	32.4	40.3	16.5	43.0	18.9	48.2
Illiterate	9.7	29.3	27.8	40.3	3.4	15.4	9.1	19.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
No. of observations	7,306	8,686	6,990	7,211	9,294	10,999	8,026	9,176
Mean years of education	6.1	4.5	5.0	3.7	7.9	5.6	7.3	5.0

Source: Hannum and Yu Xie (1998), p.329.

Ambitious non-Han people need to master Chinese in order to compete for the top jobs in government, SOEs, and other fields. However, neither the leaders of the Han nor those of the non-Han communities advocate mastering Chinese. Indeed, Chinese speakers among the non-Han people are often ridiculed. There is also tension between those intellectuals who speak Chinese well and those who do not. In Xinjiang, the *Min Kao Han* (minorities tested in Han language) and the *Min Kao Min* (Uygur educated at Uygur schools) constantly argue about the relative merits of the Han and Uygur languages and cultures.¹⁸ Often the arguments come down to the question of who the real Uygur is. These arguments about Uygur identity are a microcosm of many other arguments in modern PRC about who is “Chinese.”

Implications for policies on minorities

Two dimensions of the minority issue need special attention and a response by Government: the emergence of minority concerns over the development of the Western Region, and the difficulties of establishing market forces.

RESPONSE TO MINORITY VIEWS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WESTERN REGION

Improving the participation of minorities in the labor market requires a combination of language, education, affirmative action, and participatory interventions. This question has become quite urgent, given the large numbers of young people from

minority groups about to join the labor force. There is now a risk that the minorities who are supposed to benefit from economic development of the Western Region will reject it because they doubt whether it will improve their lives. Some Uygur fear that the new development strategy will take the disadvantages that they have so far tolerated to a new level. This concern serves the useful function of providing a check against which the benefits of different approaches to development can be measured, and policies and strategies can be identified to ensure that the minorities do, in fact, benefit from accelerated development.

Appropriate policies to improve the employment opportunities for minorities and give them greater visibility in the decision-making process are crucial to achieving the Constitution’s promise of economic development. They are also fundamental considerations in the evolution of development strategies for 2020, in particular those strategies that aim to alleviate poverty and generate new jobs for the poor. The concerns arising from the Great Western Development Strategy, or the “Go West” campaign, include the following:

- Possible further demographic decline of the Uygur in the population of Xinjiang, Tibetans and other minorities in the population in their areas, as a result of the inward migration of Han
- Mounting concern about the southward push of the non-Uygur groups, facilitated, among other things, by the new railway between Urumqi and Kashgar that opened in May 1999.¹⁹ Similar concerns have been voiced about the possible impact of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway

- Possible damage to Uygur, Tibetan and other minority cultures following the opening of the previously isolated areas to Han migration
- Skepticism as to the availability of new jobs for minorities rather than for migrants from the east, and fear that construction workers will continue to be 90 percent Han (Table 13-5)
- Fears that with the downsizing of SOEs, there will be a continuing reduction in urban employment opportunities for minorities

The wide-ranging nature of these fears shows how insecure some minorities feel. The bulk of these fears stem from the competition that confronts them in the labor market; this in turn has repercussions for their living standards and aspirations for the next generation. Unfortunately, accelerated economic development could increase their insecurities and anxieties. Local governments should provide the most vulnerable minorities with a social safety net against the worst-case scenarios, and the rest with affirmative action strategies. In the case of prosperous minorities, planning strategies should ensure that they regard themselves as stakeholders in the project to develop the Western Region. Once they feel themselves to be beneficiaries of growth and modernization, their insecurities and fears of slippage back into poverty will evaporate.

ROLE OF THE STATE SECTOR

Conditions in the autonomous regions also make it more difficult for market forces to take root. In the urban sector, the State plays a much larger role in the west than in the east. Measures to reduce the size of the state sector to a level more comparable to that of the rest of the country are to be desired.

In the rural sector, military farms have been a feature of the PRC's border regions since the Qing dynasty.²⁰ After the civil war and the partial demobilization of the People's Liberation Army, the Government assigned land and other resources in Xinjiang to former soldiers. Since the 1950s these farms and rural enterprises have grown into a considerable economic force, now under the control

of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC). They comprise some 2.4 million persons (half of these are dependent women and children), or one-seventh of the population of Xinjiang. Together they represent a major economic force in Xinjiang as the following facts show:²¹

- The XPCC today has 170 urban settlements and about 2,000 villages throughout Xinjiang.
- It runs its own agricultural farms, agro-industries, schools, hospitals, police, and prisons.
- It owns seven universities and 37 technical colleges.
- It controls about 48 percent of the area in Xinjiang, and 30 percent of arable and irrigated land.
- XPCC output in 1997 represented about 14 percent of Xinjiang's GDP, 20 percent of its export trade, 24 percent of its agricultural production, and 40 percent of its textile output.
- Some XPCC towns (e.g., Shihezi, 250 km west of Urumqi) are almost entirely Han settlements that have attracted large numbers of seasonal and permanent migrant workers.

The scale of its operations means that XPCC will continue to play a major role in the development of the Western Region. In addition to its economic importance, the XPCC plays a critical role in matters of border and internal security. In 1990, the significance of the XPCC was recognized when it was redefined as a "Stand Alone Planning Unit" and made directly accountable to the State Council.²² Further administrative reform in the late 1990s gave the XPCC the status of a corporation in addition to its other multifaceted roles, so that it can raise foreign direct investment in Hong Kong and abroad.

Like the SOEs, the XPCC is facing major challenges and difficulties. Its agricultural productivity has slipped below that of the nonstate sector. In particular, agricultural output per hectare is low compared with the nongovernment sector, despite the heavier application of fertilizers and electricity, and despite the high proportion of paddy fields in the regimental farms (Table 13-11).

Table 13-11 XPCC Agricultural Output, 1999

Sector	Gross Output (million yuan)	Land (thousand hectares)			Fertilizers (Mt)	Electricity (MWh)
		Paddy	Dry	Irrigable		
XPCC	12,206 26.5%	27.9 39.3%	69.7 30.9%	958.0 31.0%	1.69 34.8%	104.3 44.5
Others	33,906 73.5%	43.0 60.7%	156.1 69.1%	2,129.1 69.0%	6.44 65.2%	130.1 55.5
Total Xinjiang	46,112 100.0%	70.9 100.0%	225.9 100.0%	3,087.1 100.0%	8.14 100.0%	234.4 100.0%

Source: Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook 2000.

Entry into the WTO will create severe difficulties for the XPCC because of the likely reduction in cotton prices. The enterprises run by the XPCC are already heavily subsidized and loans are given with insufficient concern for long-term economic sustainability.²³ Minorities are underrepresented in the workforce, although exact figures are not available. For the XPCC to play a leading role in promoting rural development and in accelerating the economic development of minorities, major changes will have to be made in its operations.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICIES

Regional growth demands a concerted effort by governments at all levels to meet two essential preconditions:

- Improved employment prospects for minorities, with greater job diversification away from dependency on agriculture
- Improved minority representation at the highest levels of government and of the management of old and new enterprises

These development strategies have a better chance of long-term, sustainable success in creating stable conditions for economic growth than alternative ad hoc policies. If the interests of the minorities are made part of the routine business of government and administration, then it will be no longer necessary to formulate policies on the basis of perceived national emergencies. Economic development will not automatically benefit minorities, even if political leaders wanted it to.²⁴ It requires integrating minority needs and perceptions in the daily, routine business of government and administration. The objective of uplifting the minorities is a laudable one, but it requires a pragmatic response to their frustrations and vulnerabilities.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMS TO PROMOTE MINORITY INTERESTS

Since the days of Mao's revolution, the PRC has had an ambitious program of affirmative action to promote the needs and interests of the country's minorities. Despite this, the minorities in the Western Region remain relatively backward and disadvantaged compared with their Han counterparts. How has this paradox come about?

A recent review by Sautman²⁵ of the PRC's preferential policies for minorities stresses the wide coverage of these programs. He argues that the needs of the minorities have been served relatively well and with minimal opposition from the Han. The policies for minorities include:

- Family planning preferences
- Educational preferences
- Hiring and promotion of minority cadres and leadership
- Minority representation in representative bodies

Not all of these policies have produced equally desirable results, however. The greatest success has been the family planning program, which has handled culturally sensitive issues well by exempting minority groups from the one-child family restrictions that apply to the Han. At the same time, as Sautman may have noted, once a minority person is employed by the State, these privileges end. So minorities that achieve upward socioeconomic mobility face the same restrictions as the Han. This is a reasonable position for the State to maintain, but it also demonstrates the limits of preferential policies for minorities.

The record of educational preferences is variable. Many programs give minority children benefits through subsidies, special boarding schools, and access to colleges with lower entrance requirements. However, these policies have proven inadequate in

areas of extreme poverty where the indirect costs of education prevent children from attending school no matter how large the subsidy (Chapter 6). Many preferential policies are also only partially successful because they act in an environment of segregation. Boarding schools and colleges especially for minorities are separated from the mainstream Han facilities. This fragments educational opportunities and can lead to minority students suffering feelings of inferiority. Moreover, higher up in the educational scale, the percentage of minority representation declines. In Ningxia, 18 percent of tertiary students are from minorities although the minority population is a third of the total population. In Tibet, Tibetans represent around 97 percent of the population but tertiary institutes report minority representations ranging from only 66 to 92 percent.

It is not possible to provide better employment opportunities for minorities without removing these bottlenecks in the educational infrastructure. As the economies of the west move toward a greater emphasis on sophisticated industries such as tourism, the pressure for better and higher education will increase. Responding to this pressure by creating appropriate facilities will ensure that the minorities can participate in the economic benefits of the western development strategy.

There is also a need to improve preferential programs to increase minority representation among the cadres. To expedite the advancement of the minorities, preferential employment is most important. Jobs in culturally sensitive areas or for the production of goods and services for particular minorities are often set aside for employees from those minorities.²⁶ Many SOEs, even in Xinjiang, require applicants to pass employment exams and typically these allow minority candidates to pass with lower scores. Whether or not employment then flows according to the results of the exams is unclear. Moreover, there are claims to the effect that new enterprises prefer not to employ local minorities. The history of preferential policies suggests that there is a need to deal with the fundamental problems of

improving the minority groups' education and employment. In particular, measures need to be taken to ensure that production follows the discipline of the market, and to protect the minorities against the side effects of the PRC's entry into the WTO. Preferential policies by themselves are unlikely to produce an adequate response to needs. This will be even truer in the coming decades as the pressures on the PRC to emerge as a globally competitive producer increase. Serious consideration therefore needs to be given to a range of policies:

- Increasing Government action to improve education, particularly in those areas most likely to improve the employment mobility of minorities, considering the new requirements under the Regional National Autonomy Law of 2001
- Providing special loan programs to assist minorities in developing SMEs (Article 35 of the Regional National Autonomy Law of 2001 requires national autonomous areas to establish RCCs and local commercial banks)
- Adopting policies to ensure that the minorities are not the first to be made redundant when SOEs are downsized
- In areas where new migrants and cadres are building up new industries, formulating policies to ensure that local people, and not merely the migrant workers, are given jobs
- Introducing statistical reporting on employment and education of minorities to enable more systematic study of the relevant issues
- Developing integrated ICT services to disseminate information about opportunities in employment, education, and language training to towns and villages that are remote from the cities

INCREASED MINORITY REPRESENTATION IN DECISION MAKING AND MANAGEMENT

A critical ingredient of minority policies is measures to promote participation by minority leaders in the decision-making and planning processes of

government and production. Governments at all levels need to consider the following kinds of initiatives:

- Developing appropriate benchmarks to measure the involvement of minorities in government
- Promoting minority leaders to the top levels of provincial, prefecture, and county governments
- Accelerating training programs to equip minorities for leadership roles
- Accelerating language training programs to increase the Chinese and English language skills of minorities

WHY MINORITY PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING IS ESSENTIAL

Minority representation in national institutions, with the exception of the Party itself, has been very good (see “Minority Participation at the National Level” above). However, in provincial, prefecture, and county governments, minority representation at the highest administrative and party levels still needs to be improved. Minority participation in economic and social development should achieve the following outcomes:

- Minority ownership and support for the policies and priorities that evolve
- Evolution of the Western Region’s cultural diversity consistent with the needs of modern society
- Mobilization of minority resources for imaginative and innovative development projects. For instance, a thriving tourist industry is predicated on visible minority participation at every level.
- Empowerment of minorities to participate in the market economy rather than requiring government intervention to “protect” their interests

There are precedents in the PRC’s recent history for minority leaders achieving greater visibility. For example, Saifudinin, a Uygur, was First Party Secretary in Xinjiang from 1973 to 1978.²⁷

Too often policies toward the minorities promote the preservation of “traditional cultural achievements” rather than their modernization. Government policies appear to assume that minority cultures must be captured as some kind of distilled essence. The classical understanding of minority culture leads to an emphasis on festivals of music, dance, and food in which the minorities provide “performances” rather than a more routine integration of minority culture in the broad sweep of contemporary life in the PRC. There is a tendency to conceptualize minority culture in paradigms more appropriate to cultural displays in museums, instead of the active evolution of minority cultures as part of the rich, multiculturally modern PRC that needs to emerge.

NEED FOR A LINK LANGUAGE

Language competencies are a core determinant of a person’s employment opportunities and career advancement. If the needs and vulnerabilities of minorities are to be an integral part of development planning, then the complexities of language policy need to be part of the strategy for achieving growth and alleviating poverty in the Western Region.

This implies that:

- The Government should establish a dialogue with minorities on the question of language, beginning with the Uygur, focusing on how to promote Chinese language competence without jeopardizing minority languages and cultures.
- The State Ethnic Affairs Commission should mount a campaign to promote multiculturalism, reduce language barriers, and break down racial stereotypes. The campaign should begin with exchange programs for university students from different regions. The brightest students from the Western Region often study in the east, but the reverse is very rare. Short-term study experience in the west would give students from the east an opportunity to understand and appreciate minority cultures.

Notes

- 1 SDPC urged the consultants to study Xinjiang as one of three “case studies,” the other two being Gansu and Yunnan.
- 2 Attane and Courbage (2000), p. 262.
- 3 Li Danhui (2001).
- 4 Wang (1998), p. 56, note 71.
- 5 Rudelson (1997), pp. 68–69.
- 6 Rudelson (1997), 66.
- 7 United Nations Development Program (1999a), p. 47.
- 8 Wang Zongli et al. (1998), pp. 180–185. The authors explain that the managers or cadres they mention refer to those that are listed as cadres administered by the Organizing Department of the Communist Party and the Government Personnel Department. These cadres mainly include: the working staff of various Party and government organizations, social organizations, the management staff of enterprises, and the management staff of nonprofit institutions.
- 9 Mackerras (2001), p. 3.
- 10 Mackerras (2001), pp. 157–159.
- 11 Observations made by the international team during fieldwork in Aksu Prefecture, April 2001.
- 12 The Law was passed in 1998 but the history of village elections dates back to 1988.
- 13 In Luquan, team members came across Miao, Dai, and Yi men and women who had achieved astonishing degrees of upward socioeconomic mobility. The current generation is the first to abandon the traditional employment constraints of the past. Luquan County is the second-poorest county in Yunnan.
Team members had the same findings in the southern poverty county of Lancang, which is ranked as the poorest county in Yunnan and is an autonomous county. Many Lahu have broken through the barriers of previous illiteracy. In one memorable case, the Lahu leader had come from a family of 11 children; one of his brothers had attained great public prominence in a neighboring county.
- 14 The *apogu* or *kulu* (gourd) embodies the myth of the origins of the Lahu people. A very long time ago there was a *kulu*. Then along came a rat. Hearing strange noises from the *kulu* the rat gnawed a hole in it. Out of the hole stepped the ancestors of the Lahu. The Kulu festival, on 15 October, coincides with the Mula agricultural calendar (“Mula” comes from *mu*, a unit of land). The festival is not a traditional event, but was invented in the 1980s to celebrate Lahu culture.
Dr. David Bradley has pointed out that while Lahu leaders used the word *kulu* to explain to us the story of the origin of the Lahu, the Lahu really use the word *apogu* for the gourd. Since the consultant was traveling with Han officials, the Lahu must have thought that the Han version of Lahu history was what we wanted to hear.
- 15 *South China Morning Post* (1998).
- 16 Fieldwork in the poverty counties of Kelpin and Wushi (Aksu prefecture) and interviews with people from the north of Xinjiang, April 2001.
- 17 See also Sautman (1999).
- 18 Rudelson (1997), pp. 127–128.
- 19 *South China Morning Post* (1999)
- 20 Rong Xinjiang (2000).
- 21 Most of the following information is based on the best available assessment of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, namely, Becquelin (n.d.), pp. 77–80.
- 22 Becquelin (n.d.), p. 79.
- 23 Becquelin (n.d.), p. 80, for estimates of Central Government subsidies and loans, including World Bank loans.
- 24 Ruztam Minasuv, member of the CPPCC National Committee from Xinjiang, claimed recently that the minorities would be the “greatest beneficiaries” of western development. He was addressing the Ninth Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference. (Minasuv [2001]).
- 25 Sautman (1999), p. 187.
- 26 Barry Sautman, n.d., “Preferential Policies for Ethnic Minorities in China,” p. 97.
- 27 Dreyer (1986), p. 272.