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Establishing a Tujia Autonomous Prefecture in Western Hunan: A Chinese Response to the "National Question"

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Abstract
This article explores the history of the establishment of a Tujia-Hmong Autonomous Prefecture, an ethnic autonomous administrative division in Hunan province. The article highlights some significant characteristics of the Chinese institution of ethnic regional autonomy, which fundamentally departs from both the Austrian Marxist and liberal-nationalist prescriptions for solving the so-called national question. It argues that the Chinese design is neither a leftist "ethnic cultural autonomy" nor a rightist "devolved government." It appreciates the cultural psychology of ethnic groups, but also addresses issues beyond cultural affairs. The institution has administrative boundaries like any devolved government, but the ethnic group that forms the majority of the region's population cannot monopolize the local government. Local government cannot become a "nationalized" apparatus dominated by cadres and intellectuals of a particular ethnic minority. The Xiang Xi Tujia-Hmong Autonomous Prefecture is a legal arrangement that balances the interests of all the resident groups, thus providing the possibility of a true "people's government." The Tujia case does not represent a universal solution inasmuch as the characteristics of China's ethnic autonomous regions vary. However, it may still enrich our understanding of the history.

Keywords
ethnic regional autonomy, Tujia, Austrian Marxism, liberal nationalism

摘要
本文研究了成立湘西土家族苗族自治州的历史过程，在与奥地利马克思主义和自由民族主义等学说的比较中，揭示了中国民族区域自治制度的一些特征。中国的民族区域自治并非"民族文化自治"或者"高度自治地方政府"：它照顾少数民族的文

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化心理意识，但并不是处理民族文化事务的专门机构；它划分出拥有一定自治权力的地方行政区域，但不能依照简单的少数服从多数原则由当地占有人口优势的某一个民族垄断自治权力，不能形成由民族干部、知识分子控制的所谓“民族化”政权机关。只有认识到中国民族区域自治制度的独特性，才能正确推动它继续发展。

关键词
民族区域自治，土家族，奥地利马克思主义，自由民族主义

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The institution of ethnic regional autonomy 民族区域自治 in China has been of continuing interest to both anthropologists and constitutionalists, and has challenged both the theoretical principles and practical solutions to the “national question” provided by classical doctrines from both sides of the political spectrum.

Solutions to the national question date back the “moments” of Woodrow Wilson and Lenin (Anderson, 2004: 7). Although ideologically different, both Wilsonian liberalism and Leninist Bolshevism proposed highly political solutions that denied the national question is one of the most important issues in contemporary politics. As the liberal see it, the “nation” is an aggregation of all members in a political unit. Once the boundaries of that political unit have been drawn, the national question recedes in importance and gives way to the traditional issues in a liberal democracy. Similarly, Lenin generally recognized nations’ right to self-determination, but the Bolsheviks also prioritized other issues ahead of the national question, including, for instance, economic integration and proletarian solidarity (Nairn, 1997: 38-41). In scholarship on international law, both solutions refer to the legal right of self-determination. In the eyes of Bolsheviks, that right serves the purpose of justifying the overthrow of imperialist hegemony. Liberals, however, believe that right enables the people of a downtrodden society to redraw its boundaries and thus escape from tyrannical authority (Buchanan, 1991).

The national question has never been that simple. Modern ideologues from both political camps share the French Revolution ideal that the nation and state are synonymous. But reality in various societies tells a different story.

In fact, the dogmatic solutions were devised for ethnically mixed societies in which political consensus had transcended ethnic divergence.

However, if concentrated ethnic communities have managed to formulate a political agenda of their own, the assumed cross-communitarian consensus cannot be achieved.

Against this background, revisionist theories emerged in both ideological camps. In the Second International, German revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg and Austrian Marxist Otto Bauer took opposite standpoints on the national question (Hobsbawm, 1992: 2). Luxemburg's position was comparatively close to Marxist orthodoxy, but Bauer's was more pragmatic. In Bauer's view, a "nationality" is a "community of common fate" united by a shared culture. But a "common fate" is not an "identical fate": the former involves occupying the same time and space; the latter, achieving the same status. Bauer believed socialist states should create cultural institutions—legal fictions (legal persons) of a group of people inhabiting the same time and place—that would manage ethnic affairs. However, ensuring the identical fate of the proletarians, and their shared status, remained the primary responsibility (Bauer, 2008).

In recent decades, a revisionist theory has also emerged in the liberal camp. Israeli academic Yael Tamir, like other liberal nationalists, reckons that a nation is an "imagined community" that will not subvert liberal democracy. On the contrary, it creates a sense of affiliation that enriches the meaning of individual life and maintains an equitable order in society (Tamir, 1995: 10; Kymlicka, 1989; Canovan, 1996; Miller, 1997; MacCormick, 1999). Like the policy of "cultural autonomy," what liberal nationalists propose are a number of devolved institutions representing regional ethnic groups through the mechanism of elections. An ethnic group constituting the regional majority, albeit a minority in the host state, would be entitled to a leading role in local governmental and would enjoy preferential policies, but, to sustain their legitimacy, the devolved governments must abide by liberal democratic values and protect basic human rights.

The revisionist theories have the obvious strength of approaching the national question flexibly, but their weakness is also obvious. A significant number of plurinational states are neither a "melting pot" of mixed ethnic groups nor an ethnic mosaic of geographically separate communities. They are, instead, like a Russian Matryoshka doll where the ethnic majority group and minority groups have formulated various relations and experienced

long-lasting conflict and collaboration. The theories of "cultural autonomy" and "devolved government" were developed to keep ethnic politics within ideological limits, but their main objective is to marginalize and confine it.

The institution of ethnic regional autonomy in China is derived from the classic texts of the early Marxists, but, as this article will show, it has specific and distinctive characteristics. In China, socio-demographic reality has been encapsulated in the phrase "macroscopic mixture with concentration in various regions" 大杂居小聚居. Although the ethnic majority group and minority groups co-inhabit across the country, there remain geographically separate residential areas for certain ethnic groups. There are ethnic minority living areas surrounded by the ethnic majority, just as some Han Chinese residential areas are also surround by other ethnic groups. As such, a purely cultural institution loses direct contact with individuals across a continental-scale country, while "devolved governments" for ethnic communities may have too many levels.

The merit of historical study is that it may reveal the details of an indigenous institution. Socialist China's ethnic regional autonomy has inherited many genes from its Marist forebears, but the Chinese environment has shaped its physiognomy. It is neither "cultural autonomy" as envisioned by the Austrian socialists nor "devolved government" as prescribed by liberals. Rather, it is a sui generis institution developed through history.

Tujia Intellectuals' Ethnic Consciousness

In September 1978, at a meeting of a committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), Fei Xiaotong explained that

> ethnic minorities might not admit they are different from the Han Chinese population because of the concern about ethnic discrimination. Some elites among them had collaborated with the ruling class in exploiting other minorities. In the eyes of the exploited, the ruling-class ethnic minority elites were categorically the same as the Han Chinese. The elites have no interest in admitting that they are actually part of an ethnic minority. The Tujia 土家 in western Hunan is a case in point. (Fei, 1986: 2)

In reviewing the process of "ethnic recognition" 民族识别 in the aftermath of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Fei Xiaotong pointed to several cases that required further identification: the Zheyuan 蔗园 and the Danmin 疍民 were Han Chinese who had lost their identity; the Chuanqing 穿青 and the Liujia 六甲 were discriminated against by other Han Chinese so that they demanded to be recognized as ethnic minority groups; and, the Daur people 达斡尔 disagreed among themselves over whether they should be rec-

ognized as an unassociated ethnic group. The passage quoted above illustrates the complexity of China's national question and also highlights the special situation of "the Tujia in western Hunan."

The Xiang Xi Tujia-Hmong Autonomous Prefecture is located in northwestern Hunan. To the north, in Hubei province, is the Enshi Tujia-Hmong Autonomous Prefecture, and further north are two other Tujia autonomous counties. To the northwest, in the city of Chongqing, there are also several Tujia autonomous counties. Finally, to the southwest of Xiang Xi, in Guizhou province, there are two Tujia autonomous counties.

The Xiang Xi—born author Shen Congwen, who was partly of Tujia descent, created in his novels a virginal, savage, and mysterious Xiang Xi world where the beautiful female characters dance, sing, and love. Our story may also start with a young woman whose decision probably changed the fate of millions. Tian Xintao was born in a village in Yongshun county. Her grandparents did not understand the Han Chinese language, but her father learned to read and write Chinese characters. In October 1949, the Chinese People's Liberation Army occupied Xiang Xi. Tian Xintao, a schoolteacher in Yongshun county, became acquainted with some communist cadres and was offered a position in the South-Central Region Ethnic Minority Delegation 中南区少数民族代表团, which would participate in the 1950 National Day ceremonies in Beijing. The Tujia were an unknown/unrecognized ethnic group when the delegation was organized. Because Tian's maternal grandmother was a Hmong, she was assigned to represent the Hmong people in the festivities.

The Hmong are "geographically scattered across a vast land with separated residential areas, and there are obvious linguistic and cultural differences among them." However, they had been "long named as such by other ethnic groups and identify internally as one ethnic group" (Fei, 1986: 3). There was little disagreement over the fact that the Hmong people were of a single ethnicity. In China, a few groups, e.g. Han, Manchu, Mongols, and Tibetans, were officially recognized even before the PRC was established. But this was not the case with the Tujia people in the 1950s.

On September 28, 1950, the delegation arrived in Beijing and was greeted by Communist Party leaders Lin Boqu, Li Weihan, and Ulanhu (the "founding father" of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, the first of such institutions in China), and students from the Central Nationalities College (Minzu University of China). On the 28th, 29th, and 31st of that month respectively, Li Weihan, Zhou Enlai, and Mao Zedong held banquets for the delegation. A ceremony was held on October 1, 1950, in Tiananmen Square with dance performances by various ethnic groups.

On October 3, representatives of all of China's then officially recognized ethnic groups gave performances and presented flags and gifts to Mao Zedong and the communist leadership. Tian Xintao recalled:

> Chairman Mao Zedong and the five deputy chairmen sat on the proscenium, and Premier Zhou greeted us. There were 158 representatives from 48 ethnic groups, and around two thousand artists. A Tibetan representative presented a pair of buckhorns; a Dong/Kam representative, a tiger skin; a Korean, a golden umbrella. Some representatives dressed the Chairman and the Premier in their traditional costumes. I presented Chairman Mao with a package of mushrooms, and had the chance to shake hands with the Chairman and the Premier. (Peng, 2003: 314)

Tian Xintao was thrilled. She cherished the "indescribable" feeling of holding the invitation letter from "the Great Leader Chairman Mao" addressed to "Madame Tian Xintao" (Peng, 2003: 312). But at the same time she was unhappy that there was no Tujia "waving hands dance" performed in Beijing while the Hmong, Tibetan, Uighur, and Mongol artists were able to present dances. The only way to make that happen was Tujia to be recognized as a single ethnic group. She knew her mission.

Ethnic Identification: The Preliminary Work

From the 17th to the 19th of October 1950, Li Weihan on behalf of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, and Ulanhu on behalf of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, introduced the Chinese communist "ethnic policy" and the institution of autonomous regions respectively to representatives from various ethnic groups. This was the first time that Tian Xintao encountered the concept of "Joseph Stalin's definition of На́ция" and that of "ethnic regional autonomy." Tian recalled that these public lectures "encouraged her to refer the Tujia case to the central government and provided her with guidance regarding resolution of the problem." (Peng, 2003: 314)

The Stalinist definition of На́ция is "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" (Stalin, 1913). The Russian concept of На́ция, which can be translated as "nation," provoked heated debate among Chinese academics in later years, but whether the Tujia could be recognized as a single ethnic group depended on whether the Stalinist definition applied to the Tujia case (Lin, 1986).

If the Tujia could be recognized as a single ethnic group, they would be entitled to establish ethnic autonomous regions as other ethnic groups had done. The Chinese Communists had been fully aware of the importance of the national question since the revolutionary era. The Communist revolutionary base of Yan'an was close to Mongol and Muslim residential areas, and earning the support of these groups was crucial for the communist leadership (Li, 1987: 121-23). After the PRC was establishment, the Communist leadership continued to rely on its experience from the time in Yan'an. The provisional constitution, the CPPCC Common Program, contained a clause regarding its ethnic policy. Article 51 reads:

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

On October 20, 1950, the State Ethnic Affairs Commission decided to launch a study of the languages of ethnic groups. The delegation recommended the Linguistics Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences record Tian Xintao speaking. Having done so, Luo Changpei, the director of the institute, told Tian that "the Tujia language belongs to the Tibeto-Burmanese family" (Peng, 2003: 316-17). Luo's words assured Tian that her language was not a dialect of the Han Chinese language. This was the first step in passing the Stalinist test.

In the summer of 1951, Tian Xintao graduated from Renmin University and was assigned to the South-Central Nationalities College, which was founded in the same year. In the first enrollment, no Tujia student was admitted. Upon Tian's request, the college accepted Peng Kai and five other Tujia students in 1952 under an arrangement worked out by the Communist Party's South-Central Regional Bureau. In June 1952, Tian became acquainted with Tujia cadre Peng Po, who was a civil servant in Baojing county. Up to that point "there had been seven people pursuing the identification of the Tujia," Tian said (Peng, 2003: 318). The South-Central Regional Bureau had taken note of this. In 1952, Yan Xuejiong of Sun Yat-Sen University was transferred to Xiang Xin to investigate the issue.

Having met Tian Xintao, Yan Xuejiong asked her to pronounce a dozen words in her language. Yan declared, "these words alone prove that this is not a Han Chinese dialect, nor the Hmong language, but rather it is similar to the Yi

language" (Peng, 2003: 1). Yan continued his research and concluded that the Tujia were indeed an independent ethnic group. He also reported the investigation to Zhou Xiaozhou, the Communist Party chief of Xiang Xi. However, the central government and local elites had opposite opinions on the issue. Having taken Yan's conclusion into consideration, the Xiang Xi government exempted Tujia areas from the agricultural tax 农业税 in 1952, a typical preferential benefit for ethnic minorities and one that had already been extended to Hmong areas.

Ethnic Identification Launched by the Central Government

In 1952, one year after the founding of the Central Institute of Nationalities, Pan Guangdan, who had been chair of the Department of Sociology at Tsinghua University, was transferred to the new institute and assigned the task of studying Tujia history. In *The Tujia in Northwestern Xiang Xi and the Ancient Ba People*, Pan concluded that the Tujia were an ethnic minority descended from the ancient Ba people.

In May 1956, the CPPCC sent delegations to inspect various areas, and Pan, as a member of the CPPCC, was chosen to investigate Xiang Xi. In twenty-six days of fieldwork, he and a professor from Peking University, Xiang Da, "listened to reports, held seminars, spoke to individuals, had conversations . . . and received and forwarded letters." The reports mostly came from cadres of the newly established Xiang Xi Hmong Autonomous Region, of which ethnic Hmong individuals were the majority; the others came from high school principals, most of whom were ethnic Han. Seminar attendees included Tujia teachers and students, and subsequent investigations were mainly carried out by them and those concerned with the recognition of the Tujia ethnicity (Peng, 2003: 28).

Pan's main findings were that the Tujia referred to themselves as "Bizika" 毕兹卡, evidence of a "common psychology"; the Tujia resided in a concentrated area; the Tujia language was neither Han Chinese nor a dialect of neighboring ethnic groups; the number of Tujia native speakers remained comparatively high; relations between the Tujia and the Han Chinese, as well as between the Tujia and the Hmong, were not positive, as the Tujia people had been discriminated against by the Han Chinese and there was a mutual feeling of continuing hostility between the Tujia and the Hmong; finally, the Tujia people aspired to be recognized as an independent ethnic group.

However, there was another investigation jointly organized by the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, the Central Institute of Nationalities, and the

Communist Party committee of Hunan province in June 1952. Aside from recognizing the fact that the Tujia language was particular and distinctive, the conclusion of the second investigation was completely at odds with that of Pan and Xiang.

Pan Guangdan declined to grant recognition to the Tujia, but the investigation report submitted by the 1952 team contended that aside from language, other conditions for ethnic recognition had not been satisfied and thus further investigation should be required (Peng, 2003: 24).

A member of the second team irritated Pan Guangdan:

> The second team and I meet three times in Jishou and Yongshun counties and I had received some information about them. Mr. X stopped the investigation in Yongshun county . . . [while] others had gone up Mount Longshan. . . . The leaders of the group did not show any interest in approaching local people. I guessed that the so-called investigation was probably prearranged. Mr. X spent fourteen days in Yongshun, but he only read historical materials. . . . The only seminar he held was aimed at proving that the ancestors of these people were Han Chinese, and no possibility of ethnic recognition was mentioned at all. (Peng, 2003: 46-47)

Pan Guangdan reckoned that Mr. X's attitude toward the Tujia represented the position of the government of Hunan province and Xiang Xi prefecture. There was a reason they were reluctant to recognize the identity of the Tujia. In the Qing dynasty, the Tujia people in Xiang Xi "had the status of rulers":

> Those in military and governmental offices or in local positions of authority were all Tujia. In the aftermath of the Qing reorganization from self-rule to bureaucratic governance 改土归流, there was no limitation on Tujia people taking the civil service examination or holding office. In the Guomindang era, there were numerous Tujia county heads, party chiefs, and local cadres. According to the statistics for an area on Mount Longshan, 12 of 13 county heads were Tujia while 18 of 19 baozhang 保长 were Tujia. (Peng, 2003: 3)

The Qing government had intended to make an alliance with the Tujia elites to manage the Hmong people in Xiang Xi. Against this background, "the provincial and prefectural leadership who were either ethnic Hmong or sympathizers of the Hmong, had automatically adopted the Hmong perspective": "since the Tujia and others had long exploited the Hmong people, on what grounds should they be given the same consideration as the Hmong people?" (Peng, 2003: 52-53). Furthermore, "if a Tujia identity were to be recognized, the problem of autonomy would raise its head":

> The already established Hmong prefecture in Xiang Xi would have to be restructured. If it were made into a joint prefecture, say, a union between the two ethnic groups, then reshuffling personnel would not be easy. The Tujia intellectuals and population are more numerous. This means the incumbent Hmong leadership would have to give up a great number of offices. If, however, there were to be separate prefectures for the two, then the Hmong prefecture would have a smaller population and area and fewer resources, and thus the people would once again "suffer" from their historical pain. (Peng, 2003: 53)

Under these circumstances, the prefectural leadership, especially those of Hmong ethnicity, had little interest in recognizing Tujia identity.

The Establishment of a New Prefecture: Twists and Turns

The Tujia people rejected the refusal of local government. The establishment of the Hmong autonomous prefecture had severely "provoked" the Tujia. Tujia poets wrote, "The Hmong and the Tujia were siblings but the Tujia cut the bonds; they used to march side by side until the Tujia couldn't keep up with the pace." A group of "young Tujia intellectuals" were very enthusiastic about the Tujia being recognized as a single ethnic group. In 1953, Pang Kai graduated from the South-Central Nationalities College and was assigned a job in Yongshun; he had learned something of ethnic theory and Communists ethnic policies. He and Peng Wuyi, a schoolteacher in the Mount Longshan Middle School, frequently exchanged letters on the issue of ethnic recognition. In a paper, Peng argued that the Tujia were descendants of the ancient Ba people and not of Han Chinese migrants. In July 1955, Peng Bo, a member of the faculty of the Guangxi Nationalities College, wrote to Liu Shaoqi to ask for the recognition of Tujia as a single ethnic group, and attached Peng Wuyi's research paper. This movement also had an impact on Tujia peasants. As noted above, in 1952 the peasants were exempted from the agricultural tax. But in 1953 this preferential policy was canceled as the Tujia people's ethnic status had not yet been acknowledged (Peng, 2003: 340).

The issue had to be decided by the Communist Party chief of Hunan province, Zhou Xiaozhou. Zhou. In 1952, when Zhou was the Xiang Xi party chief, he had a three-hour conversation with Yan Xuejiong. But at the end, he remained silent. In 1956, Zhou had a second opportunity to listen to a recording of the Tujia language. Now he did not hesitate: "Please all stop the arguing. The language has demonstrated the fact that the Tujia people should be an independent ethnic minority. I will submit a report to the central government" (Peng, 2003: 355).

In October 1956, at the Eighth National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, the Tujia identity was officially recognized. The congress required Hunan province to submit a formal report. The CCP committee of the Xiang Xi Hmong Autonomous Prefecture drafted the document and telegraphed it to central government via the provincial government. On January 3, 1957, the United Front Department of the Central Committee identified the Tujia as a separate ethnic group on behalf of the party, and notified the Hunan provincial party committee and the united front departments of Hubei, Guizhou, and Sichuan provinces, places where the Tujia people also lived.

In March 1957, the Hunan provincial government invited Tujia elites to discuss the issue of "autonomy." Peng Po, who had been appointed a member of the Hunan CPPCC, and Peng Wuyi participated in the discussion. On August 6, 1957, the Hunan People's Committee (i.e., the government) decided to establish a Xiang Xi Tujia-Hmong Autonomous Prefecture and submitted this decision to the State Council for approval. On September 6, the State Council issued the *Decision to Establish the Xiang Xi Tujia-Hmong Autonomous Prefecture in Hunan Province*. On September 15, 1957, the prefecture convened in Jishou its first People's Congress. And on September 20, the leadership of the prefecture was elected.

The 1957 Xiang Xi Tujia-Hmong Autonomous Prefecture People's Congress decided that

> the incumbent governor of the former Hmong autonomous prefecture shall continue in office. The word "Tujia" shall be appear first as the Tujia population is larger than that of the Hmong. The Hmong area will receive the First Hospital, Jishou Middle School, and Jishou Normal College; the Tujia area will receive the Second Hospital, Baojing Middle School, and Yongshun Normal College. This arrangement shall be submitted to the provincial government for approval. The Tujia people and the Hmong people shall be treated equally in terms of preferential policies (Peng, 2003: 336)

However, a storm was brewing. In the 1950s Anti-Rightist Movement, Pan Guangdan was put under great pressure and was severely criticized. On August 30, 1957, *People's Daily* published an article, "The Poisonous Arrows of the Tujia Issue," lambasting Pan.

> In May 1956, Pan Guangdan arrived at Yongshun under the guise of investigating the Tujia people. . . . His fourth poisonous arrow was using "Tujia" regional autonomy to wreck the unity of our people. He said: "We understand that there are two groups of people. Some want to establish a separate prefecture for the Tujia people; others, most of whom have been working for the Hmong prefecture as "ethnic Han Chinese" and

> were not interested in the issue of ethnic recognition, want a joint prefecture. [In dividing the people,] he tried to stir up a wildfire. His intentions are very sinister. (Peng, 1957)

The paper accused Pan Guangdan of firing "poisonous arrows" at Xiang Xi, the fourth of which was related to the question of whether to establish a prefecture for the Tujia or to unite the Tujia with the Hmong in a shared prefecture.

On February 16, 1958, *People's Daily* published another article on the subject, this time by a "people's representative" from Xiang Xi:

> In this anti-rightist struggle, it has been revealed that a few ethnic minority intellectuals and cadres have local nationalist 地方民族主归的 thoughts and aspirations. The rightists used them for carrying out their conspiracies. On the issue of ethnic regional autonomy, they asked for "separation" or "autonomy"; they rejected Han Chinese cadres and the Communist leadership using the excuse of "local nationalization 民族化 of autonomous institutions"; under the guise of "ethnic characteristics" they refused to take the socialist road and social progress. Local nationalists are going to destroy national unity and hinder the progress of ethnic minorities; they are essentially alien to socialism and communism.

The article specifically named Pang Guangdan, Xiang Da, and Peng Po: "Last summer, . . . some rightists pretended to be 'concerned' for the ethnic minorities and provoked the people to overthrow the party's leadership. The rightists, especially Pan Guangdan, Xiang Da, and Peng Po, used all sorts of conspiracies to stir up ethnic unrest" (Shi, 1958). Xiang Da was further accused of disagreeing with the idea of a joint prefecture, as he wanted a separate Tujia prefecture. Someone alleged that Xiang Da admitted he had longed to be the Tujia "presbyter." Peng Po was accused of writing to Xiang Da to promote the latter's aspiration for Tujia leadership. The assumption was that these people were obviously plotting to establish a pan-Tujia autonomous region under their control (Anonymous, 1957). As an officially condemned "extreme-rightist," Peng Po underwent criticism in Tujia county schools (Peng, 2003: 336).

For two decades years, the ethnic identity of Tujia people had not been recognized, and they were fearful of bringing up the issue with the authorities. Their demand for recognition was not raised again until the 1980s. On November 28, 1981, the State Council issued the *Order to Resume and Correct Ethnic Identification*. The Tujia people's ethnic identification was addressed in accordance with this document, and several Tujia autonomous prefectures and counties were created (Brown, 2002). The issue of Tujia identification and autonomy was thus decisively settled.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we may highlight some pivotal characteristics of the Chinese institution of ethnic regional autonomy. First, it is a response to political discrimination and economic integration that, unlike dogmatic theories, does not ignore cultural psychology. Tian Xintao and other Tujia local cadres and intellectuals hoped to establish an ethnic autonomous region of their own because they realized the differences between their language, culture, and identity and those of other ethnic groups in neighboring areas. They observed that other ethnic minorities had taken a seat in the national political arena. The deprivation provoked them into taking action. It is important to note that the Chinese Communists have been deeply imbued with modern "scientism." The scientific evidence substantiating the difference between the Tujia language and Han Chinese language determined that the Tujia would be officially recognized as an ethnic minority. In contrast, the Chuangqing people could never be recognized, as their language was a Han Chinese dialect, even though their customs and cultural psychology were distinctive. The combined criteria of cultural psychology and language guarantee that there will not be an increasing number of recognized ethnic groups. Cultural psychology may change, but languages will almost always remain the same. Also, under these criteria, ethnicity and the area in which an ethnic group resides do not necessarily overlap. This method of ethnic identification is incompatible with the presumptions of either the Marxist and liberal theories or their revisionist versions.

Second, the Chinese institution comprehensively addresses political exploitation, economic integration, and the historical relations among ethnic groups, while Marxist and liberal theories are concerned solely with political and economic issues. Historical relations and the distribution of resources are far more complex in Xiang Xi than the dogmatic theories would lead us believe. In terms of the relations between the Tujia and Han Chinese, there was indeed ethnic discrimination, but to characterize this as political exploitation is simplistic. On the contrary, as Pan Guangdan contended, in this area the Tujia were the ruling class in a political hierarchy with the Han and the Hmong in a subordinate role. Against this background, changing the name of the autonomous prefecture from "Hmong" to "Tujia-Hmong" was more a restoration of an indigenous political tradition, and less a form of national "affirmative action." Aside from political issues, the Tujia and the Hmong are economically indivisible. Since the Tujia in Xiang Xi are more populous and comparatively well off, separating the two ethnic groups would have affected economic development in the Hmong area. Thus the two groups and the areas in which they reside

were united so as to preserve their mutually beneficial economic relationship. All public institutions were set up in parallel in the two areas in order to satisfy the two groups' needs. This arrangement was acceptable to all the people in this prefecture.

The type of ethnic regional unity in China is not what revisionist theories would lead one to imagine. It involves neither ethnic cultural autonomy nor devolved government. The revisionist solutions may foresee various problematic consequences but these are not present in the Xiang Xi situation. Cultural autonomy would probably incite the two groups to continue their historical conflict and even deepen their mutual discrimination. Or, the Tujia people probably would not want "cultural autonomy" at all as they adopted Han Chinese culture without difficulty. A program that would have created "cultural autonomous organs" along the lines proposed by Austrian Marxists would have mobilized Tujia individuals across the country like a multinational cooperation (a legal person). But this is exactly what Peng Po and Xiang Da were accused of. The two were rebuked for seeking to become Tujia presbyters and for advocating the establishment of a pan-Tujia autonomous government. However, there have never been ethnic "presbyters" in Chinese history. China's ethnic minorities, with few exceptions, lack the historical experience and the political capability needed to establish a supra/trans-provincial government. This scenario is therefore incompatible with the leftist revisionist theory. The rightist revisionist theory has other problems. The Tujia people might out-vote the Hmong and other groups in a theoretical "devolved prefecture." But if the two ethnic groups established separate "devolved governments," the Han Chinese would have economically marginalized both resource-thirsty areas. "Devolved governments" would be those "that refuse the socialist road and progress with the excuse of special [ethnic] characteristics." But the ethnic minority cadres and intellectuals of Xi Xiang did not favor a majoritarian institution at all.

Third, cadres and intellectuals at both the central and local levels played a significant role in establishing ethnic autonomous regions, and they continue to maintain those institutions. Tian Xintao, Peng Kai, Peng Po, and Xiang Da, among others, unknowingly served as the "founding persons" of a new prefecture and other autonomous prefectures and counties. In addition, the exemption from taxation illustrates how the creation of the Xiang Xi Tujia-Hmong Autonomous Prefecture benefitted Tujia peasants. However, contrary to what the dogmatic and revisionist theories would lead one to believe, non-Tujia cadres and intellectuals also contributed greatly to the establishment of ethnic autonomous regions. This spirit of comradeship between majority 21 and minority cadres and intellectuals is of particular importance. Among majority

ethnics in the central and local governments, there have always been those who support ethnic regional autonomy. In return, ethnic minorities willingly cooperate and collaborate with the state. Nor have the ethnic autonomous organs been "nationalized" in Soviet terms. In the Chinese institution of ethnic regional autonomy, an ethnic minority group, no matter whether it is the majority population in a region or not, cannot monopolize the leadership of autonomous organs. Ethnic regional autonomy thus is not a Chinese embodiment of dogmatic and revisionist theories. The ethnic complexity in China cannot be addressed by theoretical "ethnic cultural autonomy" or "devolved government." The institution of China's ethnic autonomous region address cultural affairs, but it serves the whole population in an area instead of a particular ethnic group. Ethnic autonomous governments are entitled to certain autonomous powers, but they are not governed in accordance with simple majority rule. A regional majority will not secure the power to rule, and thus the "nationalization" of an autonomous region is unlikely. The Xiang Xi Tujia-Hmong Autonomous Prefecture is a legal arrangement that balances the interests of all groups, thus providing the possibility of a "people's government." It must be said that the Tujia case cannot be considered a universal solution since the characteristics of China's ethnic autonomous regions vary. But hopefully, the story told in this article may enrich our understanding of this historical design, which is crucial for contemporary debates in both the academic and political arenas.

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