

China Pictorial (1950–1966): A Study on Ethnic Minority Images

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Abstract: As a crucial vehicle of state discourse, *China Pictorial (1950–1966)* reflected national concerns, ethnic policies, and state undertakings through reports covering 490 appearances of ethnic minority individuals from 36 distinct ethnic groups across 19 provincial-level regions, including people of both genders from a wide range of occupations. Through its construction of ethnic minority images, the pictorial conveyed implications of unity and progress, encompassing socioeconomic development in ethnic regions, ethnic solidarity and patriotism, as well as the inheritance of ethnic cultures and the advancement of ethnic minority affairs. The portrayal of ethnic minorities in *China Pictorial (1950–1966)* offers valuable references for shaping ethnic minority images, telling ethnic stories, and articulating a discourse of ethnic unity in the new era.

Keywords: China Pictorial; Ethnic Minorities; Image Construction; Unity and Progress; Contemporary Value

1. Introduction

In its maiden editorial (abbreviated as 50-01 for Issue 1, 1950; this format is used throughout for citing the pictorial's year and issue number), *China Pictorial* stated: "Let us work together with all our strength to make *China Pictorial* a success, so that the great people of our great era may leave beautiful and moving records in this pictorial." "The great people of our great era" naturally includes ethnic minorities. In fact, *China Pictorial (1950–1966)* constructed a large number of ethnic minority images through photographs and texts. As Li Chunsheng remarked: "Leafing through forty years of *China Pictorial*, one finds coverage of ethnic minority affairs in almost every issue." [1] Current research on figures within *China Pictorial* includes Yao Yao's exploration of children and adolescents [2], Cao Peixin and Xue Yifan's

analysis of the working class [3], and Li Gang and Liang Xiaojuan's study of female imagery [4]. Only Ye Yutong has examined the construction of ethnic minority images from a journalistic perspective [5]. Therefore, focusing on issues of *China Pictorial* published from July 1950 (first issue) to May 1966 (eve of the Cultural Revolution), this paper investigates how the pictorial constructed ethnic minority images through three formats: photographs (including covers, back covers, and interior illustrations), texts (feature articles and short essays), and the combination of image and text. It further analyzes the underlying reasons for such constructions, interprets the implications of unity and progress embedded in these ethnic minority images, and discusses their contemporary value.

2. Construction of Ethnic Minority Images in *China Pictorial (1950–1966)* and Its Causes

2.1 Ethnic Affiliation of the Featured Images

Table 1. Ethnic Affiliation and Appearances of Ethnic Minority Images in *China Pictorial (1950–1966)*

Ethnic group	Appearances	Ethnic group	Appearances
Zang	161	Hui	9
Mongol	76	Hani	7
Uygur	50	Oroqen	7
Yi	26	Yao	5
Kazak	23	Tu	5
Korean	20	Jingpo	5
Miao	21	Dai	5
Zhuang	11	Tatar	4
Kirgiz	9	Lisu	4
Li	4	Va	3
Lahu	4	Manchu	2
Bouyei	3	Dong	2
Yugur	3	Russian	1
Qiang	3	De'ang	1
Tajik	3	Sui	1
Uzbek	3	Tujia	1
Monpa	3	Hezhen	1
Naxi	3	Gaoshan	1

Between 1950 and 1966, *China Pictorial*

presented either single individuals from one ethnic group, multiple persons from a single ethnicity, or multi-ethnic groups of individuals, altogether covering 36 ethnic groups and 490 appearances. Table 1 details the ethnic distribution and corresponding numbers of appearances.

As shown in Table 1, images of the Zang, Mongol, and Uyghur peoples total 287 appearances, accounting for 58.57% of the 490 appearances. The Zang people alone account for 32.85% (161 appearances). Why did the Zang people feature so frequently in its coverage? On the one hand, the peaceful liberation of Xizang—populated predominantly by Zang people—in 1951 signified the unification of mainland China. Having become masters of their own destiny, the Zang people, along with other ethnic minorities, played significant roles in various state affairs, making coverage essential. For example, "A New World: Impressions of Rural Xizang in the New Era" (61-01) took Zhalang County as an example to highlight the spirit of Xizang people in actively rebuilding their homeland after overthrowing the dark rule of the serf system. On the other hand, in the early years after liberation, the living standards of Xizang people remained relatively low. Positive reporting by the pictorial helped promote ethnic unity and social progress while effectively encouraging the development of a new life. As illustrated in "In the New Life" (59-11), the people of the Garze Zang Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province engaged in active labor and enjoyed a happy life after democratic reforms. The family of Dengzhu Pengcuo (Zang) actively participated in collective labor in the agricultural producers' cooperative and received 2,000 kilograms of grain in 1958.

2.2 Regional Focus in Ethnic Minority Imagery

The photographic and textual coverage in China Pictorial (1950–1966) drew ethnic minority figures from 19 present-day provincial-level administrative regions (including provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities). Table 2 displays the regional distribution and appearances.

Table 2 indicates that regions with large ethnic minority populations—Xizang, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Sichuan, and Yunnan—were covered more frequently, while multi-ethnic areas such as Beijing, Guangdong, Hubei, and Fujian also

received attention. This demonstrates that, as an official media outlet, China Pictorial covered ethnic minorities across China, exhibiting a pattern of "focusing on ethnic autonomous regions while also attending to multi-ethnic areas." Two factors explain this regional emphasis. First, ethnic regions served as the geographical foundation for representing the everyday life of ethnic minorities. For instance, in the photo essay "Prosperous Yili" (64-03), people of various ethnicities in the Yili pastoral areas united and, with state support, vigorously carried out grassland infrastructure construction, including new irrigation works, permanent shelters, veterinary disease prevention networks, livestock breed improvement, and integrated farming and herding suited to local conditions, which greatly improved the face of the steppe. The accompanying photos showed members of cooperative groups singing and dancing joyfully after work, effectively portraying their life circumstances. Second, multi-ethnic areas acted as important platforms for promoting ethnic unity and progress. Fei Xiaotong's article "A School for Ethnic Minorities" (52-06) and the rare photographs presented detailed information on guiding principles before and after the founding of the Central Institute for Ethnic Minorities (predecessor of Minzu University of China). It mentions the distribution of branch campuses: "The main campus is located in our capital, Beijing; there are eight additional branches in Dihua (now Ürümqi—author's note), Lanzhou, Wuchang, Guangzhou, Nanning, Chengdu, Guiyang, and Kunming." This indicates that multi-ethnic regions (or cities) including Beijing played a crucial role in constructing ethnic imagery.

Table 2. Regional Distribution and Appearances of Ethnic Minority Figures in China Pictorial (1950–1966)

region	Appearances	region	Appearances
Xizang	118	Guangxi	12
Xinjiang	84	Hunan	6
Inner Mongolia	76	Beijing	6
Sichuan	38	Ningxia	5
*	29	Hainan	4
Yunnan	37	Guangdong	3
Qinghai	19	Heilongjiang	2
Jilin	18	Liaoning	1
Guizhou	15	Hubei	1
Gansu	15	Fujian	1

Note: * The provincial-level region of the ethnic minority figures is unspecified.

2.3 Occupational Representation of Ethnic Minority Images

In China Pictorial (1950–1966), ethnic minority

figures were often portrayed according to different occupations, including herders, farmers, students, cadres, and others. Table 3 summarizes the occupational categories and appearances.

Table 3. Occupations and Appearances of Ethnic Minority Figures in China Pictorial (1950–1966)

Occupation	Appearances	Occupation	Appearances
Herders	89	Educators	10
Farmers	85	**	8
Cadres at various levels	64	Athletes	6
Students	62	Hunters	4
Art and literary workers	56	Soldiers	3
Workers	46	Revolutionary martyrs	2
Conference delegates*	37	Religious figures	1
Medical personnel	17		

Note: * "Conference delegates" is not a strict occupation but refers to ethnic minority figures who attended conferences at or above the provincial level without a specified occupation; ** refers to those whose occupation is unknown.

Table 3 shows that herders and farmers together constitute 35.30% of the total recorded occupational appearances. This pattern can be attributed to the fact that animal husbandry is highly developed in Xizang, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and other regions, making herding a primary livelihood for many ethnic minorities, while numerous ethnic groups across both southern and northern China engage in agriculture. As the state advanced development in ethnic regions, ensuring basic production and livelihood was of utmost concern: the stability of agriculture and animal husbandry directly impacted the stability and progress of minority areas. Therefore, the high frequency of coverage of farmers and herders reflects the great importance the state attached to the production and livelihood of ethnic minorities. In addition, students and cadres accounted for significant proportions because developing education and training for ethnic minority students and cadres were crucial pathways to realizing ethnic equality and promoting cultural integration. Education enhances the cultural quality of minority students, representing a key state measure to consolidate national cohesion. Meanwhile, ethnic minority cadres, as bridges between state policies and minority populations, play a central role in implementing ethnic policies and coordinating interethnic relations, requiring proper training and deployment. The construction of these images helped break stereotyped notions of ethnic minority cultural backwardness and shaped the image of ethnic minorities as positive learners and responsible

participants in governance.

2.4 Gendered Portrayal of Ethnic Minority Images

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the state granted women a series of institutional guarantees; "women enjoyed equal rights with men politically, and 'women's liberation' and 'gender equality' became mainstream social discourse." [6] Consequently, in China Pictorial (1950–1966), reporting on women frequently used expressions such as "female + occupation/identity," for example, female commune member, female tractor driver, female delegate, etc. This indicates that in the early years of the PRC, women's liberation and gender equality became increasingly prominent topics. Ethnic minority women gradually stepped out of traditional gender roles, emphasizing their high level of participation in fields previously dominated by men. Table 4 shows the gendered reporting by year.

Table 4. Gender-Based Coverage of Ethnic Minority Images in China Pictorial (1950–1966) By Year

Year	Male	Female	Year	Male	Female
1950	9	4	1959	34	26
1951	12	0	1960	14	17
1952	3	7	1961	15	10
1953	24	30	1962	21	21
1954	27	15	1963	12	15
1955	23	14	1964	23	10
1956	18	8	1965	26	14
1957	13	6	1966	4	2
1958	9	4			

As seen in Table 4, in 1951 no ethnic minority

women were featured, likely because the coverage that year concentrated on major political events in which men and male-dominated groups were predominant. After that, the gender ratio became relatively balanced, with an overall male-to-female ratio of 1.4:1. The pictorial's coverage of ethnic minority women resulted from the post-1949 emphasis on women's liberation and the promotion of women's participation in social activities, enabling women to begin distinguishing themselves in education, production, and labor. The gradual equalization of gender ratios corresponded with the development of various undertakings in ethnic regions: men remained active in politics, production, and military spheres, while women's participation continued to increase in education, healthcare, cultural and artistic work, and agricultural production. For example, in "Two Girls from the Lesser Liang Mountains" (61-02), Yi women Jiajia and Wujia, who had been "Guozhuang slaves" (household slaves) under the chieftain system, became medical personnel at a health center after training by the state. In summary, the gendered reporting of ethnic minorities in *China Pictorial* (1950–1966) responded to the demands of the era and reflected the positive development of gender equality in ethnic regions under state policies, thereby enriching the portrayed minority images and enhancing their progressive significance and social value.

3. The Implications of Unity and Progress in Ethnic Minority Images within *China Pictorial* (1950–1966)

3.1 Political and Economic Progress in Ethnic Regions

In the political sphere, after the founding of the People's Republic of China, the system of regional ethnic autonomy established institutional safeguards for ethnic minorities' political rights. As ethnic autonomous areas successively implemented regional ethnic autonomy, the political consciousness of ethnic minority cadres continued to rise, and they actively participated in electing cadres at various levels of autonomous regions. Hence, *China Pictorial* carried relevant reports: "People Using Harrows to Plough Fields" (53-01) used pictures and text to present the first People's Congress held in Nanning, Guangxi on December 6, 1952, showing delegates from various ethnic groups

voting. Meanwhile, ethnic minority cadres personally took part in elections and assumed the responsibility of governing and developing their hometowns. For instance, in "Former Tenant Farmer Now Elected Vice-Chairman of Autonomous Region" (64-11), Tiemuer Dawamaiti, once a tenant farmer, actively stood for election and was successively elected township head, county head, and vice-chairman of the autonomous region.

The "Trial Plan for Training Ethnic Minority Cadres," approved for implementation in November 1950, stated: "The primary approach is to establish political schools and political training courses to train ordinary political cadres, supplemented by the training of urgently needed specialized technical cadres ... so as to assist in the liberation and construction undertakings of all ethnic minorities." [7] Consequently, *China Pictorial* (1950–1966) also showed the improvement of ethnic minority cadres' governance capacities through study and practice. For example, in "Cultivating Talents for Ethnic Minorities" (59-05), a Yi girl named Yang Daidi pursued advanced studies at the Central Institute for Ethnic Minorities and later became vice-governor of the Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan. *China Pictorial* also revealed the commendable spirit of ethnic minority cadres who worked diligently for the nation and their families, depicting a picture of continuous political progress among ethnic minorities. At the same time, it constructed an image of ethnic minorities as politically conscious, enthusiastically participatory, and capable in governance. This portrayal not only reflected the remarkable effectiveness of the regional ethnic autonomy system but also demonstrated the signal advantages of the new China's policy whereby all ethnic groups jointly become masters of the state.

In the economic sphere, Provisional Measures for Implementing the Outline of Regional Ethnic Autonomy, promulgated on August 9, 1952, stated: "Under the unified economic system and economic construction plan of the state, the organs of self-government of each ethnic autonomous region may freely develop local economic enterprises within the region." [8] With strong state support, ethnic minorities began to adopt and utilize advanced production techniques to boost production. *China Pictorial* (1950–1966) covered this: in "Improving Sheep Breeds" (55-01), the state organized activities

such as breeding sheep selection and shearing demonstrations in Gansu, trained specialized ethnic minority technical personnel, and promoted Xinjiang fine-wool sheep among all ethnic groups in the northwest to develop the national economy. The lower part of the feature showed scenes of Mongol and Zangzu herders from Haibei Zangzu Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai selecting fine-wool sheep from Xinjiang, and Bai Kejiang (Kirgiz), head of the Tekes County Fine-Wool Sheep Artificial Insemination Station, explaining sheep feeding and management methods to herders.

Beyond advanced technology, the pictorial also contained many photo-essays reporting on how farmers and herders benefited from new production organizations and infrastructure construction, as well as foreign trade: "Visiting the Li People Deep in the Coconut Grove" (62-05) described Li Guahua (Li) in Dengsi Village, Hainan, who, after liberation, gained food and clothing, received education, and, under the leadership of the commune, together with villagers, built water conservancy projects, ultimately overcoming drought and achieving a good harvest. In "From Ya'an to Lhasa" (55 - 12), after the completion of the Kang-Zang Highway, unsalable goods such as wool and animal hides from Xizang began to flow steadily to the interior, while daily necessities such as tea and salt, which they lacked, were transported to Xizang by continuous convoys. Moreover, "From Ya'an to Lhasa" reported that a Zang woman named Guizhi was finally reunited with her sister, from whom she had been separated for fourteen years, thanks to the construction of the highway.

3.2 Ethnic Solidarity, Mutual Assistance, and Patriotic Sentiments

"China's ethnic unity has multiple dimensions: political unity, social solidarity, and civic solidarity." [9] Looking back to the early years of the PRC, ethnic unity meant that all ethnic groups, based on equality, mutual respect, and mutual assistance, worked together and moved forward hand in hand. Therefore, China Pictorial (1950-1966) presented ethnic unity and mutual assistance precisely around this core meaning.

In the production practices of ethnic regions, the Han Chinese and ethnic minorities complemented each other's advantages and cooperated for mutual benefit. China Pictorial keenly captured such "hot topics": in

"Interethnic Relations on the Production Front" (53-08), members of a Mongol-Han joint agricultural producers' cooperative learned from each other's strengths in production, combined farming and animal husbandry, and steadily increased output, demonstrating the superiority of interethnic unity and progress. Accordingly, Nashun Wulitu (Mongol) stated: "In the past, the reactionaries built a wall between Han and Mongol people. That wall, under the leadership of the people's government, has been torn down. Now, the Mongols and Han have one heart and one goal, like brothers." This shows that interethnic barriers in the old society had been dismantled, and new bonds between the Han and ethnic minorities were being forged through shared labor and mutual support.

Furthermore, the various ethnic minorities increasingly learned about each other, helped one another, and ultimately created a picture of harmonious coexistence and mutual aid. In "The Kucong People Have Found the Sun" (60 - 16), Pu Xiuying (Hani), a grassroots cadre, lived and ate together with the Kucong people (later classified as Lahu in 1985) scattered in Simao, Honghe, and other areas of Yunnan, in order to change their primitive and impoverished way of life. Through outstanding cadres like Pu Xiuying, different ethnic minorities were able to make collective progress in the political and economic fields.

"Patriotism is an emotional system that reflects an individual's attachment to the motherland, a set of behavioral norms that regulate the relationship between individuals and their country, and also the core of the national spirit that supports the prosperity and development of a nation." [10] Through the construction of ethnic minority images, China Pictorial (1950-1966) fully demonstrated their strong patriotic spirit. In "The Beginning of a Happy Life: Inner Mongolia after Liberation" (51-11), a Mongol herder named Quedege, in order to support the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea, donated his horse to the Chinese People's Volunteers and remarked sincerely: "My dearest People's Volunteers have been fighting abroad for more than a year. I present my horse. When the brave volunteers ride horses, they will fight the American bandits with even more vigor and prestige, and will surely achieve great victories." As an ethnic minority who actively supported the war and closely linked his personal fate to the survival of the nation, Quedege's simple act

of "donating a horse" reflected his love for the country, his respect for the Volunteers, and his deep devotion to the great motherland.

The formation of patriotic sentiments among ethnic minorities derived not only from the state's patriotic propaganda but also from the commemoration of patriotic ethnic heroes and the transmission of their spirit. In "Visit to the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region" (58-06), the statue and folk songs commemorating revolutionary martyr Wei Baqun reflected the ethnic minorities' firm stance of resisting foreign aggression together, carrying forward the revolutionary spirit, and deeply identifying with the state's leadership in liberating all ethnic groups. In "The Splendid Donglan" (63-09), a group of Zhuang Young Pioneers gathered around an elderly woman in front of Wei Baqun's tomb, quietly listening to her tell the story of how Wei Baqun resisted the reactionaries and led the Zhuang people in revolution. This demonstrated the ethnic minorities' profound remembrance of revolutionary forebears, and even more, the continuous transmission of the red gene among ethnic minorities, eventually integrating the revolutionary spirit into their bloodline. Evidently, through these vivid figures and events, the pictorial constructed a positive image of ethnic minorities as people with a strong sense of national identity, showing that ethnic minorities defended their national dignity and the unity of the country with concrete actions, thus forming an important foundation for the nation's prosperity and strength.

3.3 Inheritance of Ethnic Cultures and Development of Ethnic Affairs

The inheritance of ethnic cultures is one of the implications of unity and progress in the ethnic minority images constructed by China Pictorial (1950–1966). "The traditional cultures of China's ethnic minorities are a cohesive value system" [11] and an important part of Chinese culture. Relevant reports in the pictorial not only facilitated the inheritance and development of ethnic cultures but also enhanced mutual understanding and integration among different ethnic groups. For example, "The Twelve Muqams" (56-09) reported on the collection, collation, preservation, and translation of the Uygur folk music "Twelve Muqams." A typical case was the 70-year-old Uygur folk artist Turdi Ahun, who, even after suffering from the

oppression of feudal forces, was still able to perform the Twelve Muqams relatively completely. In "Our Growth" (62-09), Dawa, a student at the Inner Mongolia Art School, learned the Morin khuur (the Mongolian horsehead fiddle) from veteran folk artist Selaxi, but the melodies Dawa played were no longer the tragic tunes of Selaxi's generation; instead, they were joyful melodies symbolizing a beautiful new life.

Moreover, ethnic minority artists refined and elevated folk art. In "Uygur Folk Songs and Dances" (62-11), the female dancer Kangbalhan refined and polished Uygur folk songs and dances, bringing folk art into the grand hall of high culture. These reports revealed the persistent spirit and tenacious character of ethnic minority folk artists who guarded the roots of their culture despite hardships, shaped a vivid image of them as carriers of ethnic culture, and transformed the relevant arts into gems of the Chinese nation.

The development of ethnic minority affairs includes the continuous progress of education, healthcare, and other undertakings under state policies. "Since the founding of the PRC, the government and educational authorities at all levels have adopted many major measures and implemented special preferential policies, greatly accelerating the rapid development of education in ethnic minority regions." [12] Specifically, the state established the Central Institute for Ethnic Minorities to train ethnic minority cadres, and institutions of higher learning and primary/secondary schools were successively founded in various ethnic regions, such as Yanbian University and the Ili Women's Senior High School in Xinjiang. In relevant reports in China Pictorial (1950–1966), ethnic minority students demonstrated high morale in their studies in order to better contribute to their hometowns in the future. For example, Reyisa, the female principal of the Ili Women's Senior High School in Xinjiang (53-09), stated that over 90% of the school's students passed their examinations. Similarly, after graduation, most ethnic minority students went on to work in ethnic schools in their own regions, passing on what they had learned to the next generation. For instance, "Yanbian University" (55-04) noted that all the graduates of the Teachers' College of Yanbian University, represented by Quan Bingchun, went on to serve in secondary schools in the Yanbian area.

At the same time, medical services in ethnic regions were relatively underdeveloped, making it urgent to develop healthcare in those areas. To this end, the state and local authorities jointly trained a large number of ethnic minority medical workers. For example, in "The Tajik People Have Their Own Doctor" (64-02), the young Tajik doctor Ibrayim had led a vagrant life in the old society; after the founding of the PRC, the people's government sent him to Ürümqi to study medicine. After completing his studies, he returned to his hometown, went deep into pastoral areas to conduct itinerant medical services, and earned wide acclaim from the local populace. In short, China Pictorial's coverage of the progress of ethnic minority social undertakings not only exhibited the same indomitable fighting spirit seen in reports on production and local development but also demonstrated the ethnic minorities' willingness to accept new ideas and new concepts.

4. The Contemporary Value of Reporting on Ethnic Minority Images in China Pictorial (1950–1966)

4.1 Typical Reporting Provides a Paradigm for Shaping Ethnic Minority Images in the New Era

Model reporting is defined as in-depth coverage of exemplary events and figures with universal social significance [13]. The reason model reporting is welcomed lies in its in-depth, vivid, authentic, and compelling narration of exemplary individuals. To meet the needs of dissemination in the national political, economic, cultural and other fields, typical reporting has run through different periods of China's news dissemination. In China Pictorial (1950–1966), typical reporting included multiple photo-essays on the active participation of ethnic minority deputies to the National People's Congress—such as Ngapoi Ngawang Jigme—in state affairs and their efforts to safeguard national unity and ethnic solidarity. The pictorial also used third-person narratives to show how many ethnic minority people, originally at the bottom of society, actively followed the state after the founding of the PRC and became masters of their own destiny. It also employed interviews and first-person accounts to shape the image of ethnic minorities as united, hardworking, and capable. Examples include "No Longer 'Move from Place to Place in Search of Water and

Grass'" (57-10), featuring Alata (Mongol), who organized commune members to build animal sheds, new houses, and schools; and "The Leap Forward of the Jingpo People" (59-02), featuring Zhao Zaonu (Jingpo), who actively studied advanced agricultural techniques such as close planting and intertillage.

In the new era, many progressive figures continue to emerge from among ethnic minorities, and various media compete to cover them. Consider the case of Huang Wenxiu (Zhuang), recipient of the "July 1 Medal," "Role Model of the Times," and "Most Beautiful Striver." On the early morning of June 17, 2019, Huang Wenxiu, First Secretary of Baini Village, Xinhua Town, Leye County, Guangxi, lost her life while on official duty amid a sudden mountain flood. CCTV News took the lead with a Douyin (TikTok) video titled "Remember This Young Woman: Her Name Is Huang Wenxiu!" The WeChat pictorial article by Guangxi Daily carried the headline "Grief! The Disaster Scene She Filmed Became Her Last Video; Baise's First Secretary Confirmed Dead." In print media, Qin Weifeng published an article in Contemporary Guangxi titled "Interpreting the Original Aspiration and Mission of Outstanding Cadres with Life-In Memory of Huang Wenxiu, First Secretary of a Poor Village Dispatched by the Propaganda Department of the Baise Municipal Committee." Xu Haitao, He Wei, and Qu Chen wrote "Steadfast Original Aspiration, Glowing Youth-In Memory of Huang Wenxiu, Resident First Secretary of Leye County, Guangxi" in Current Affairs Report.

A comparison reveals that the coverage of Huang Wenxiu and the ethnic minority reports in China Pictorial (1950–1966) both belong to the genre of typical reporting. As Ji Weimin and Zeng Leixiao noted, "Typical reporting originated in the rectification and reform movement in the Yan'an journalistic circles in the 1940s." [14] The coverage of Huang Wenxiu represents both the continuation and innovation of typical reporting. Therefore, by virtue of this journalistic form, reports on Huang Wenxiu naturally absorbed the experience and style of earlier propaganda efforts, including those of China Pictorial, thus better shaping an exemplary ethnic minority image in the new era.

4.2 Ethnic Narrative Offers Reference for Telling Ethnic Minority Stories Well in the New Era

From the perspective of ethnology, an ethnic narrative encompasses dimensions such as ethnicity, culture, identity, and cultural identity. In *China Pictorial* (1950–1966), ethnic narrative specifically refers to narratives centered on the construction of ethnic minority images, showcasing various aspects of ethnic groups. For instance, in "Cooperativization of Animal Husbandry" (54-08), the narrative describes how Huo Letai (Mongol), responding to the call of the government, formed a production mutual-aid team with other herders, such as Sidebu. It also portrays how, after adopting a policy of sedentary pastoralism and combining animal husbandry with sideline occupations, team members worked actively and cooperatively, ultimately achieving a leap in income. In "They Were Serfs Before" (61-08), Suogeng (Zang), who had been a serf, was often thrown into an ice cellar by his master for amusement, embraced the call of the times, and joined the People's Liberation Army. After the founding of the PRC, he studied at the Central Institute for Ethnic Minorities and was later elected vice-chairman of the All-China Federation of Students. These examples show that with the help of the state, ethnic minorities, through individual effort, could become masters of their own destiny and achieve prosperity.

In the new era, reports such as "Fuyun Ranch: Poverty Alleviation Is No 'Floating Cloud'" (Guangming Online, January 2020) and "Huang Xiuying: From Deficits to Tourism Magnate, a Yi Woman Lifts Herself out of Poverty with Diligence" (Sichuan Online, September 2020) both focus on the Yi woman Huang Xiuying, describing her journey from being a registered impoverished household to establishing the Huang Yaomei Inn, increasing her income, and helping neighboring farmers achieve moderate prosperity. Another example is "The Embroidery Youth Zhang Jianxun: Revitalizing the Intangible Heritage Charm of Yi Embroidery" (CCTV Online, June 2025), which reports that Zhang Jianxun, a post-1985 Yi youth from Mouding County, Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan, became an "embroiderer" and led local embroidery women into the Yi embroidery industry, not only increasing their income but also, through participation in the UNDP "Entrepreneurship and Employment Development for Ethnic Minority Youth and Women" project, revitalizing the intangible cultural heritage of Yi embroidery in modern life.

From *China Pictorial* to diverse new media in the new era, and from Huo Letai, Suogeng to Huang Xiuying and Zhang Jianxun, ethnic narratives from different periods have presented positive stories of continuous progress in economic, political, and cultural fields. They show that inspiring ethnic narratives have been continuously referenced and passed down, and are still being told in the new era, thereby contributing to the dissemination of China's good stories.

4.3 "Three Exchanges" Discourse Provides Discursive Support for Promoting Ethnic Unity in the New Era

In China, ethnic unity is the lifeline of the people of all ethnic groups; thus, it is essential to strengthen interethnic contacts, exchanges, and integration. The history of "three interactions" (communication, exchange, and integration) among the Chinese nation is long-standing. The narrative of "three interactions" among all ethnic groups refers to the narration of historical facts concerning these interactions within the Chinese nation. After the founding of the PRC, the state adopted a series of proactive policies and measures to promote ethnic unity and progress, such as implementing regional ethnic autonomy, facilitating economic and cultural exchanges among ethnic groups, and thereby providing guarantees for interethnic interactions.

Regarding the "three interactions," *China Pictorial* (1950–1966) presented numerous effective narratives: in "Training Medical Workers for Ethnic Minorities" (55-02), students of various ethnic backgrounds from the Department of Medicine at Beijing Medical College studied and progressed together with Han Chinese students, embodying mutual tolerance, understanding, and harmonious coexistence. In "The Rich Southern Xinjiang" (58-03), Xu Ya'er, a Han Chinese girl from Wuxi Silk Mill, despite language barriers, patiently taught local Uyghur female workers through gestures and other means, eventually forming deep friendships with them. In "Han and Uygur Workers Convey Friendship" (64-03), Seyiti (Uygur), a fitter at the Xinjiang October Tractor Repair and Assembly Plant, benefited from the patient training of the veteran worker Chen Dianfeng (Han). He not only became a model worker in the plant but also saw his apprentice Lin Honghai (Han), whom he had nurtured devotedly, honored as a pacesetter in

the workshop. These reports all reflect the historical reality of harmonious "three interactions" among ethnic groups in study and work.

Since the new era, interethnic "three interactions" have reached new heights, and consequently, "series of stories about ethnic unity figures" have emerged in abundance. For example, China National Radio Online's "Yuli: The Pomegranate-Seed Friendship That Warms the Years" (June 2022) told the story of how the family of Tusan Sapar (Uyгур) and the family of Li Hushan (Han), descendants of the second group of aid-education youth from Jiangsu Province, have helped and protected each other for nearly half a century, forming a deep bond. Another example is China News Service's August 2025 article "From Aiding Xizang to Residing in Xizang, From Volunteer to Local—A Young Mongol's Affection for Xizang," which narrates the story of Zhao Yan, a post-1990 Mongol youth, who has taken root in Xizang, carried out charitable activities, assisted impoverished Xizang people in Lhasa, Nagqu, and other areas, and practiced ethnic unity.

Evidently, from China Pictorial to contemporary new media, while the content of the "three interactions" narratives differs, the underlying theme of ethnic unity is continuous. Moreover, the narrative tradition of the former continues to influence the telling of ethnic unity stories in the new era, consolidating the concept of ethnic unity and progress and thereby continuing to gather strength for the promotion of ethnic unity and progress in the new era.

5. Conclusion

As the first comprehensive state-level pictorial oriented toward the world, China Pictorial extensively reported on ethnic minorities between 1950 and 1966, covering 36 ethnic groups and 19 present-day provincial-level regions, including both men and women in occupations such as herders, farmers, cadres, and workers. This coverage stemmed from the state's concern about the liberation of ethnic minorities, regional development, and gender equality. Examining the ethnic policies and the pictorial texts of that period, we find multiple implications of unity and progress: political and economic advancement in ethnic regions, inter-ethnic solidarity and patriotism, and the inheritance of ethnic cultures and the development of ethnic affairs. The reporting of

ethnic minority images in China Pictorial (1950–1966) also offers significant insights for ethnic work in the new era: typical reporting provides a paradigm for shaping outstanding ethnic minority images; ethnic narrative offers a reference for telling ethnic stories well; and the "three interactions" discourse provides discursive support for promoting ethnic unity. In summary, exploring the ethnic minority images in China Pictorial (1950–1966) clarifies the essence of ethnic policies and work during that period and provides valuable references for ethnic work in the new era.

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