

Preface

The objective of this book is to collect and estimate a set of data on the socioeconomic situations of China's 56 ethnic groups.

Although the majority of China's population is of the Han nationality (which accounts for more than 90 % of China's population), the non-Han ethnic groups have a population of more than 100 million. China has officially identified, except for other unknown ethnic groups and foreigners with Chinese citizenship, 55 ethnic minorities. In addition, ethnic minorities vary greatly in size. With a population of more than 15 million, the Zhuang are the largest ethnic minority, and the Lhoba, with a population of only about 3,000, the smallest.

China's ethnic diversity has resulted in a special socioeconomic landscape for China itself. However, till present, a complete socioeconomic picture of China's ethnic groups—especially of its smallest ethnic minorities—still remains unclear. How different have been China's ethnic groups in every sphere of daily life and economic development during China's fast transition period? In order to answer these questions, we need a detailed and comparable set of data for each of China's ethnic groups.

There has not been any official statement of China's socioeconomic development from a multiethnic dimension. The only official data released can be found in *China Ethnic Statistical Yearbook* (released by the State Ethnic Affairs Commission of the People's Republic of China since 1994). However, as the above Yearbook has only reported the socioeconomic statistics for the minority-based autonomous areas, a complete set of China's multiethnic data cannot be derived from it. For instance, only five provincial level minority-based autonomous regions (i.e., Inner Mongolia, Tibet, the Zhuang-based Guangxi, the Hui-based Ningxia, and the Uygur-based Xinjiang) and 30 ethnic minority autonomous divisions at prefecture-level and 120 ethnic minority autonomous divisions at county-level—all of the latter cover China's 16 provinces, three autonomous regions and one municipality directly under the central government—are included in this Yearbook. The entire minority-based autonomous areas, however, account for only less than a half of their total population of the ethnic minorities (see Appendix B for details). This means that Han Chinese has now become the

majority of many, if not all of the above minority-based autonomous areas. In addition, still quite a few of non-Han minority people are found in the Han-based administrative areas (see Appendix A for details)—the breakdowns of their socioeconomic data have never been mentioned in China's existing statistical reports.

Another reason why the data of an ethnic minority autonomous area should not represent those of that ethnic people stems from two facts in China: first, there usually exist two or more ethnic peoples in each ethnic minority autonomous area; second, each ethnic group is usually included geographically in at least two administrative divisions (provinces, prefectures, counties, and others). For instance, according to the composition of population, the Mongol people have now become a true minority in Inner Mongolia, hometown of the ethnic Mongols, as a result of the large-scale Han immigration during the twentieth century.

Multicultural China

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