

**Going to the Capital:
Political Tourism and Ethnic Narrative in Early Socialist China**

Beginning in 1950, the newly established People's Republic of China launched an annual programme to invite frontier minority leaders to attend the May Day parades and the National Day (1 October) parades on Tiananmen Square in Beijing. Unlike western colonialism predicated on the separation of the metropole and the colonies, and still different from modern ethnic tourism wherein minorities and their cultures become objects of the tourist gaze the 1950s Chinese tourism aimed at bringing minorities, especially their leaders, out of their alleged 'isolation' and expose them to China's hospitality and its greatness (in the sense of military power and technological advancement). In this paper I will first outline the operation of what may be called 'political tourism', arguing that it constituted the core of China's 'Nationality Work' in the 1950s, ultimately responsible for the integration of the frontier. Second, I will analyse a particular kind of 'ethnic narrative' this tourism engendered: minority leaders were expected to articulate their impressions of the capital and other advanced places they had visited both during the journey and after it as an indication of their acceptance of China as their nation-state.