

# Under the 'Fourth World': A Discussion to the Transformation of Character-Settings in Chinese Ethnic Minority Films

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**Abstract**—Based on the key issue of the current fourth world studies, the article aims to analyze the features of character-settings in Chinese ethnic minority films. As a generalizable transformation, this feature progresses from a microcosmic representation. It argues that, as the mediation, films note down the current state of people and their surroundings, while the 'fourth world' theorization (or the fourth cinema) provides a new perspective to ethnic minority topics in China. Like the 'fourth cinema' focusing on the depiction of indigeneity groups, the ethnic minority films portrait the non-Han nationalities in China. Both types possess the motif of returning history-writing to the minority members' own hand. In this article, the discussion entirely involves three types of cinematic role-settings in Chinese minority themed films, which illustrates that, similar to the creative principle of the fourth film, the themes and narratives of these films are becoming more individualized, with more concern to minority grassroots.

**Keywords**—Fourth world, Chinese ethnic minority films, ethnicity and culture reflection, mother tongue (muyu), highlighting to individual spirits.

## I. INTRODUCTION: A POSSIBILITY: THE 'FOURTH WORLD' ENCOUNTERS ETHNIC MINORITY QUESTIONS

PREVIOUSLY, there has been discussion about the relevance of Chinese ethnic minorities and the serious impression they left upon the world. There are prejudgements to these words, which most typically include political interventions in the autonomous rights and human rights of Chinese minorities. Usually, critiques from outside are unfriendly, making it hard to determine whether they are true or false. However, when discussing minority arts, some scholars have frequently mentioned the preservation of the intangible cultural heritage protection of ethnic minorities through, for example, folk song-dance tradition, local festivals and ethnic elements in design and handicrafts. These aspects are culture-related, having a few concern with political-commercial interventions, with certain achievements in demonstrating the folk performances, custom/artwork exhibitions, and ethnic literary school, which could act as vehicles to deliver their culture to the outside.

No matter the showing concerns to minor groups in western scholars' discussion or to the ethnic minority in China, the final purpose is the same, concerning more to the marginalized and culturally-disadvantaged groups of human beings. Hence, there are reasons to create accessibility and possibilities

between the fourth world theory and minority study is in China, also for the 'Fourth Cinema' and 'Chinese minor film'. Meanwhile, it also gives room to search the similar value between two studies. One of the idealistic expressions to a utopian conceivability to a Fourth-world-like community in western countries can be found in a novel, *Almanac of the Dead*. The American novelist Leslie Marmon Silko [13] claims a view on American minority groups during the period from the Second World War to the Cold War. As the dominant part of the first world that brings order and progress to other countries, inside there are a lot of smaller communities all over America, which are able to reformed into Fourth-World-like unions. However, the social relation of the centre (majority white citizens) and margin (minority urban residences) is inharmonious to non-white minority members settled in cities, so Silko points out that these minority people actually confronted a situation of 'voicelessness and unjustness', especially for the residents live in tiny communities. Therefore, she appeals for the establishment of an unprivileged and broadly-inclusive 'Fourth World' for minor people, like all nationals consciously change the communities a union with non-discriminatory to each individuals. As the writer argues, the Fourth World's rule is a theoretical tool that can produce solutions to cultural and ideological conflicts between powerful ethnic groups and powerless minorities that were relatively optimistic about the future. The kernel of this novel assumes that Fourth World theory can shift the bias between minority and majority. However, this assumption ignores a problem: communities of minority groups in America are scattered in different cities and have fluidity and discreteness of population and social structure, whose scale and amount are far less than the scales settlements of minority groups in other countries, such as the Maori Nation in the New Zealand and the Inuit people in the Arctic tundra. Their indigenous living territory and reproduction of generations make them connected from the bloodline and land through shared culture. Tradition is not only the representation or the cards in people's hands used to win the game of negotiation of power between majority and minority, but also the result of time passing.

Normally, in classifying whether a group of indigenous community belongs to the Fourth World, the standard is decided by several factors, including two of the most fundamental criteria: economic level and ideological differences, but also with some rules to judge and weigh the powers amongst countries and regions. It would be crystal

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clear if listing the differentiability between Third- and Fourth-World countries to summarize the particular standards. Originally, 'Fourth World' was a term to describe the derived way of classification to several known ethnic communities that are remote and enclosed, and, far more underdeveloped than Third-World countries. These distant places or minority settlements remain under a lower-civilized social structure or tribe society, with a slash-and-burn, hunter-gatherer way of production. Basically, according to Turner [1] and Barclay [2], related studies focused on two kinds of powers of indigenous people and civilization in the Fourth World, to fight for entitlements of existence: indigenous rights and human rights of minority clansman. The former is derived by a cogenetic link with a conceptual comprehension of a 'national-state' and an outside autonomy or half-grasped governmental jurisdiction of indigenous strongholds, which refers to the basic territories, materialistic consumption and other deserved rights, that making them to 'be looked like a nation with autonomy'. The human rights include basic attribute for residents with recognized nationalities such as religious faith, self-governing territory, and the right to gain medical treatment and other public services, and it also involves the kernel of this article's argument, the individuals' values of existence and indispensability of minor culture. In another word, adding the 'Fourth World' perspective to the discussion of minority groups is an appeal to study the return of rights, ethnicity and indigeness, and put ethnic groups in an equal position with the majority.

As for the correlations which bring Chinese ethnic minority films under the discussion of the Fourth Cinema, two particularities should be clarified initially. The first one is the standard for distinguishing the indigenous group and ethnic minority. The definition of indigenous group highlights a ownership of territories and a high-level and negotiable autonomous rights, which is also concerned with the allowance from the legislative and political side. The latter refers to a multiculturalism and diversification of ethnic features within a regnant cultural cycle. In China, apart from the collectively political identity to the *zhonghua minzu* (Chinese nation), the non-Han minorities are not self-categorized and are also regarded as Chinese citizens and are authorized to enjoy equal rights with Han citizens. Their settlements are empowered relatively low-level autonomies, but the main ruling ideas should be obedient to the top, while minority members are provided with certain privileges in society. In addition to the unsimilarity, 'Fourth Cinema' and minority-themed film are concerned with filmmakers' identities and backgrounds. Barclay [2, p.4] stresses a necessity that indigenous films should be generated by non-westerners, stressing interiority and purity of the creators. What matters most is how the filmmakers themselves are involved in the production, demonstrating their position and perspective for minority groups. Nevertheless, there are fewer concerns regarding filmmakers' minority identities for Chinese films, but film themes and plots must have ethnic minority elements.

Some features in China should be noticed as well. Firstly,

most ethnic minorities have lifetime settlements. The government repeatedly stresses the strategic importance of the maintenance of a multinational country, so there is a specific and concrete insistence to certain amount of autonomous regions in the Northwest and Southwest of China; these vast areas have large-scale strongholds for ethnic minorities. Secondly, as for another form of inhabitants, minority people live together with Han people. Majority of these areas remain a certain population of minority people and have few mass migration.

The third point is the unclear/melting cultural boundaries between Han and non-Han Chinese. Minority members have formed a perception representation of the *zhonghua minzu*, as a meta-identification of ethnicity and narration. Although they have permission to select their own designation of a nation, to fill in the race column on their resident ID within a redline of the 56 nationalities (however, there are still quite a number of unidentified minorities live in the frontier, typical examples are Mosuo people and Onkor people in the Southern China). This principle of classification comes from the borrowed classification model of a Soviet Union piece, from the *National Question*, written by Stalin in 1931, but it provides limited perspectives for minority classification in China. Therefore, Chinese minorities somehow were officially grouped as identifiable nations officially and forcibly into 55 nations. Due to some neglected dispute of history, many members of 'unidentified' minority were chronically striving for the 'unrecognized ethnic identification'. Until 2003, some provinces in southwest China allowed those people to indicate the name of their nation as they wished, but the attached remark must follow the officially acknowledged ethnic minority names on the ID card, in a bracket behind the listed name. However, the tiny concession created a possibility that could stimulate either their mental secession to the previous ethnic identity or the passion for traceability of their history.

Two points are the superficiality of cultural representation and a usage of language, which are more general crisis compared with other issues. Agritourism was regarded as one of the most rapid methods to boost regional economics and narrow gaps between distant minority regions and developed areas. Countless resorts have been built with advertisements of a 'symbolic of ethnic minority culture' and a development of cultural industry. As a consequence, singing-dancing performances and live exhibitions of handicraft art, and other tourism-attached activities are labeled as demonstrations in resorts. Behind them, the most common spectacles are bars and instrument shops, hidden under the 'baldachin' of minority-style buildings but selling percussion instruments and barbeque inside. Traditional use and basic meaning of minor culture in China have thus changed. It is no longer a jigsaw puzzle displaying minority cultures and ethnical national symbols, but a replica of curiosity consumption and tourism, all forms of national culture are defined as superficial expressions and production of curiosity. Further, the indigenous languages of minority groups are slowly disappearing. Mandarin, as a standardized language for Chinese, has been extended to compulsory education and daily

communication among different nationalities, forming a unified spoken language. The disappearance of minor languages and regional dialects is inevitable, and there will be more non-Mandarin languages become functionless, only used for oral communication. Sam Hall, an anthropologist, published a book in the 1980s about the disappearing Eskimo civilization. Hall [3] understands an irreversible trend of the indigenous tribes' disappearance, and emphasizes that Eskimo is a present from the Arctic Ocean, but has already been sentenced to accept the death of its civilization because the unimaginable transformation of the nature, culture and living environment demolish the ancient way of production. The relevant discussion of the Fourth World/Fourth Cinema also focuses on issues closed to culture and real life. As the main body of cultural activities, the value of human existence and decision-making are emphasized, priority is given to the necessity and consciousness of human-led transformation. The Fourth World doctrine records the problems of minority individuals, such as their psychological representation, internal relations, changes in habits, attitudes towards alienated traditions, and other criticisms.

For the filmmaking language usage, a theoretical similarity can be acquired from the argument of 'original flavour' made by Chinese scholars, namely in Chinese *pinyin*, the *yuanshengtai* approach, which is inclined to re-figure pristine ethnicity and cultural formation by artistic creations. To be more specific, *yuanshengtai* approach aims to combine minor culture with popular cultural and artistic forms. Not only for the theme, *yuanshengtai* definitely initiates adopting the mother tongue in ethnic minority filmmaking, recording dialogue, conversation, voiceover, and manuscripts (some plots with non-minority language-speaking characters still use Mandarin). Meanwhile, film directors should ensure that the main characters are cast with minority actress and actors. Both the 'Fourth Cinema' and the *yuanshengtai* stress the retrospective movement of 'purity' of ethnicity and the aboriginality of culture of filmmaking, which is a response of protecting rare minority language and an easily implemented 'de-Hanization' behaviour.

Filmmaking provides space for the expression and negotiation of minority culture through an initiative and authoritative form of expression. The Fourth Cinema claims that the right of directing should be given back to minority clansman. It is not a restriction to the identities of professionals, but it emphasizes a shift to the right of independent speech by returning the power of speaking to normal people, which equals a reappearance of self-consciousness and the right to write own history in films. It reflects the contemporary narrative of ethnic minorities by setting typical protagonists and telling their 'personal stories' (occurring in minority-settled areas). At the same time, the use of minority spectacles and folklore in plots represents an 'incarnation' of culture and regional circumstance. Both natural scenery and the man-constructed environment in the film are mirroring reality. In addition, most contemporary minor cinema maintains the style of realism, naturalism, and non-fictional narrative elements, leading to an ethofiction

style. Although some romanticized plots exist in the theme, their influences on the realistic narrative are limited. Fourth Cinemas hardly ever notice the weirdness and debauchery, but the most chaotic, hidden and marginal aspects of ordinary life, because these details are true reflections of individuals, environment and their interactivity. In minor films, landscapes and its counterpoint usually displayed can be found in the real world, such as grasslands, remote rural areas, trading villages, urban-rural continuum, farmland, and other non-urban scenes. The remoteness of geography and scenery is actually a restriction of untrue narration, and necessity of naturalistic storytelling, so minority centered films should be evaluated by referring to the originality and value of ethnographic studies to reflect the status quo and primitiveness of settlement dwellers. Thus, all these points have relations with a triangle relationship': people, living circumstance, and how the zeitgeist is displayed, which is the core of reflection of Fourth Cinema.

## II. THREE MODES OF CHARACTER-SETTING

Protagonists, exotic circumstance, and cultural specificity stay on the same horizon. Sometimes, one of these sides may have a forward-thinking expression in artworks, such as an avant-garde imagination and prettification of a realistic situation, or a philosophical 'coming back' of ethnicity and civilian perspective. In general, the characterization of roles cannot be separated from a participation of 'the other'. It can provide a non-first-person perspective to record and criticize the subjecthood of protagonists. Although sometimes the minority identity and life background will give filmmakers the ability to reflect on his/her own understanding to the minority theme, it will also provide a non-first-person perspective. When minorities are regarded as an indispensable part of the Fourth-World narrative, the Fourth World has been placed on a conspicuous stage, or at the position of 'to-be-looked-at-ness'. Later, when minority filmmakers' rise, the directedness of identity will provide them with convenience through being professionally educated by universities and culturally connected with ethnic settlements. Their ethnicity, language ability, unique mode of thinking, and knowledge of ethnic culture and aesthetic will optimize the projects.

As for why it is worthy to analyse changes of role-setting of minority features, it is mainly because of concern for the value of human individuality. Although Fourth Cinema is noticed as an exhibition of interactions of people, circumstance, and zeitgeist, it is undeniable that the role of the character is always the most important factor in this relationship. For films, the intelligence, subjectivity, and sense of order can offer a mature sequence and stabilization of society, while the surroundings and time spirit where people stay is created by the way of authors interpretation. So, the mentality of contemporary minority members is a key issue to represent these aspects, as well as the function of protagonists in the narrative. The transformation of cinematic role-setting has gone through three stages, from the initial stage during the 1950s until approximately the early 1980s, which was the earliest stage of national reconstruction after the war, during

the age of the endless 'evolutionary cycle' of Chinese cinema [4]. The feature of character-setting is the replacement of real ethnicity. Minority roles were formulaic to people's nature and attributes. The setting of roles had to serve a motif of the revolutionary demands and socialist identity construction. Revolutionary optimism and romanticism in films provide fulfilment and image-builder to ideology-shaping for the magnificent goal of people (renmin). The second and third types coexisted. Filmmakers' sight line became narrowed and focused, and more concerned with minority individuals' spirits, non-macro narration angles, and modernized stories. Between these two, there are only differences in storytelling approach. The former made progress from a simply exclusive narrative to Chinese nationhood and optimism, but this new story-telling mode has become more fictional and romantic. For instance, it involves exoticism, love stories, the legend of national celebrities, or historical events. However, some depictions of roles are inherited from the old method, with problems such as deliberate demonstration of exoticism, superficial curiosity to create an imagination of Shangri-La, and formalization (stereotyping) of protagonists. The type of work is propaganda-based image-building works acting as the regional 'name card' of ethnic minority autonomous settlements to the outside world.

The first example is an old film, *Five Golden Flowers* [5]. The heroine Jinhua (Golden Flower) is a classic role that represents the overall image of minority people between the 1950s and 1960s, the early years of the founding of the PRC. After the first decades of the establishment of the PRC government, the most fundamental purpose of government was to form and maintain a 'united front' of people from different nationalities and to fasten economic development of the autonomous regions, building a role mode of production and providing optimistic predictions for people to foresee the nation's rejuvenation. This film also praised the success of ten-year national ethnic minority management policy. Jinhua is an emblem of an idealized image of female labour, she is a good-looking young woman, also a qualified 'warrior' of the socialist revolution. As the vice leader of the rural cooperatives, this protagonist is created perfectly, who has multiple identities: she is both a goddess-like female leader of minority villagers in the village, a skilful labourer in the frontline of production and a decision-maker.

The usual impressions of female in that period are the poorly oppressed, the suffering, or those accused of the destruction of beauty in 'feudal society'. Compared with them, the image of Jinhua is set as a transcendently and progressively. In the fiction of revolutionary romanticism after the 1950s, the imagination of the female position was stressed. Chairman Mao's slogan 'Women hold up half the sky', enlarges the ability and subjectivity of the Chinese female in production, especially the ability and subjectivity of women labours, and calls for reducing prejudice to women like Jinhua become the most ideal characteristics. In the film, Jinhua makes a great balance between finding her true love, and the responsibility of leading villagers to a better life. She can be pure to her lover, just like most young women, but when she

handles her jobs, her behaviour and attitude become that of an effective and intelligent decision-maker. Jinhua's multifaceted personality refers to a mixture of femininity and masculinity, audiences could witness both her womanliness in daily life, and manhood as a grass-roots leadership, Jinhua's two-sidedness is well delivered by the qualified performance of Yang Likun. At the same time, this protagonists has a dual identity, including that of a CPC member and a Bai person, which has been recognized and fully conforms to a strategy, the government used to build a betweenness when developing the ideological discourse of grassroots, which required a double political identity to villagers, who are minority members in conscious and allowed to the ethnicity unchanged, but they must be submissive to the leadership of communist party. Also, the combination of the mainstream narrative and perfect female character in the past has produced an ideal fact that the goal of socialist construction has a commonality and may be regarded as the unified pursuit of each Chinese minority groups. However, the portrait of Jinhua loses the reliability and particularity of as a real person, and the story depicts her as a nondescript. Given this character's identity of the Bai minority, it does not mean that the narrative will not be trapped by a fixed paradigm. A Jinhua-like female character-constructing has a universality, which can be found in many films and novels about the Chinese revolution. Jinhua cannot be regarded as a unique and typical individual's portrait of a minority protagonist, but a familiar 'rhetorical expression' of a stereotype under the roof of the revolutionary romanticism narrative. As Wang and Liu [6] claim, this pattern is a 'centralized unified expression of people's will', based on a fictionalized series of a harmonious world in the future yet woven by the government in the name of the people. It stresses highly consistent standards to classify minorities and ignore the stereotypical restriction of bloodline and ethical differences among people, then finally establish a supranational community in China. However, this prediction is impossible to achieve. Although the boundaries between minorities and non-minorities are becoming confusing, the vanishment of symbolic boundaries does not mean the non-existence of hierarchy and conceptual diversities that exist amongst different nationalities.

For the second type, the film themes are moving away from revolutionary topics and characterless expressions, but the storytelling is trapped by romantic adventures in exotic territories. Also, the character-making started to avoid over-idealized depictions and returns humanity to the roles, but most of the characters are full of stereotyped settings and exotic images. The first example is a Tibetan film, *Once upon a Time in Tibet* [7], a modern narrative of a romantic-tragic American-Tibetan love story during the Second World War. An American pilot, David, crashes his plane and is rescued by Tibetan locals. His white-person appearance is unfamiliar to indigenous Tibetans, so locals ask a widow, Yong Cuo, to take care of him. The image of Yong Cuo is unique to other villagers: she is a beautiful minority woman, endowed with divinity and fantasy, like a pearl on this plateau. However, in the potential minds of the local people, Yong Cuo is cursed by

the devil because of her husband's early death. But, this is contrary to other dwellers' foolishness and xenophobia, Yong Cuo has incomparably perfect personalities: soft, beautiful, wise, dutiful, trustworthy and self-sacrificing. After David is misunderstood by Jiang Cuo, a radical Tibetan youngster, Yong Cuo decides to run away with the pilot. In the end, she even sacrifices herself for David who should have been shot by Jiang Cuo, without any hesitation.

In some ways, Yong Cuo is given divinity and a mission of salvation. The filmmaker empowers double metaphors to this character, a rescuer of people in trouble who cures the traumatized spirits of the American pilot as well. Figuratively speaking, Yong Cuo is an external embodiment of the inner ethnicity of the Tibetan nationality, with a comparative depiction of local residents around her, this role is endowed with kindness, tolerance, and sympathy. The merits are naturally branded in her soul as a representation of traditional morality in imagination. At the same time, Yong Cuo is comprehended as an incarnation of the Tibetan natural and cultural scope. Her feminine features and aesthetic pleasure and affinity allude to people's habitual imaginations, being mysterious, saintly and fascinating to the Tibetan culture. If we compare *Jinhua* with *Yong Cuo*, there is a common feature, all of them are unrepresentative and unrealistic. *Jinhua* is too perfect and given too much purpose to cater to the minority image-building mission. Meanwhile, the latter is another extreme: Yong Cuo is treated as a sacrifice of fatalism, a replacement and buttress to the existence of males. This character is imbued with a saintly personality, but totally unable to re-find the record of a normal human, which is covered by the divinity, and the entire image of her is flattened.

The second instance is *The Temptation in Lincang* [8]. This film depicts a story of a rich young boy, Qian Duoduo (Qian Duoduo is a homophone for 'a lot of money' in Chinese), who is addicted to video games. In order to guide Qian in finding the meaning of life, his father spends a huge amount of money to direct a *mise-en-abyme* in Lincang, a county in southern Yunnan, famous by the minority tourism, in terms of guiding Qian to figure out what kind of life he expects. According to the manuscript, Qian is calculated to meet a Wa minority girl named Yezi (in Chinese, 'leaf') who lives in Lincang, via an on-line chatting app. Over time, Qian has good expectations for this unknown girl and looks forward to a chance to meet the real person. Until Yezi claims a sickness so she may be absent from a local photography competition in Lincang. She encourages Qian to enter this photography competition, 'The Best Scenery of Lincang', as a replacement for her. Qian feels it would be his best chance to meet this mysterious girl, so he practices photography and goes to the small county. By following the journey of Qian, the entire film combines scenic film and romantic features, with demonstrations of the excellence of autochthonic minority folk tourism, exotic spectacles and a resort in the ancient Wa village built by the local government. The largest failures are the superficiality and fluidity of the protagonist's portraits. The *telesis* of ethnic minority spectacles restricts a deep examination of the

characters. As for Qian, the motivation to make the trip is simple: his curiosity about meeting Yezi. Qian's perspective and sauntering around this Wa people's resort represents the values of the majority, a process of conscious transformation of opinion, verbalizing the exoticism by following their thoughts, from surface to essence.

Qian lives in a small but scenic folk motel owned by a father and daughter. Like many other minor films, *Tian zhongyun*, the father is an indigenous Wa person, who is friendly and wise; while the daughter, Tian Anxiang, is also simple-hearted and trustworthy, and she offers Qian assistance when he is in trouble. Dramatically, Qian does not recognize that his journey in Lincang follows a prearranged schedule suggested by Yezi, and he indulges in this journey to seek her existence. Yezi can control his destination, and offers the most perfect advice. During the trip, Qian meets some local young girls and initially supposes that Yezi could be one of them. But after talking further, none of them is in line with Qian's prejudgment to Yezi, who has a standard to distinguish Yezi: she should be pure and tender, and should not be cynical like other young ladies he met. However, at the *Monihei Carnival* (an annual celebration held for sacrifice and tourists), Qian finally realizes that Yezi does not exist, this character is an invented role to chat online with him, to go along with this reality show' in Lincang. This journey per se, is also a carnival-like fiction, with a loss of right-to-know and subjectivity of him, whose infinite insistence on the existence of this Wa girl is self-deception of his mind. The journey tends to be a half-real, half-imaginary experience, with an audio-visual depiction of the illusory landscapes in this tiny county.

Obviously, the depiction to Qian is a satire to tourists who visit resorts, who will learn and experience nothing except some exhibitions to pseudoclassic minority sceneries. 'Yezi' is a phantom who attaches herself to the formalistic spectacle of this Wa settlement and performative forms of minority culture. The meaning of this fake identity is decided by the contents of a computer screen and Qian's fantasy, which is floating and changeable. The virtuality of 'Yezi' means a potential uprooting of the Wa culture, which is more likely to be artificially made for tourism. A crisis hides behind the spectacle, although Lincang is the traditional territory of Wa people who have lived there for generations, also inevitably influenced by the disappearance of ethnic cultural features. However, the exotic imagination has not been dispensed, so the director seems urgent to look for a carrier for Yezi's identity, so the 'most pristine Wa girl', Tian Anxiang, is appointed as the girl closest to Qian's imagination. This setting seems to be a well-designed response to the foreshadowing of plots, the Wa girl Anxiang is the ignored simple person who supports Qian all the way, who has a most beautiful part that fascinates Qian, and ethnicity that is purity and optimism of Wa nation.

In short, the first model and second model of character-setting are far from the advocated pattern of the Fourth Cinema. The expression of minority and the native spirit of minority group members is almost untraceable in film contexts or is replaced by unconvincing illusions. At the same time, it

is unable to demonstrate the interconnectedness of roles and their surroundings.

For the third model, the purpose of filmmaking finally comes closer to the self-reflexivity and re-announcement to ethnicity of minorities, as the Forth Cinema theory suggests, the reflection overwhelms exhibition, realities of ingenious civilization come closer. According to Murray, [9] people should understand how indigenous members understand their own culture and how their performance are consumed by works of art and spectators. It should be mentioned here that Murray's concept of 'consumption' pays more attention to the expression of Maori culture in New Zealand local and international films, but the 'consumption of ethnic minority' in Chinese cinemas means the illusion and curiosity of minority symbols of Han audiences. Two examples that I want to analyse are more noteworthy for the return of characters' human nature. Concerns about real minority individuals have been re-examined, mainly in the context of people's spiritual dilemmas and maladjustment, and sometimes in the context of competition between individuals, traditions (differences in ways of thinking) and cultural ecosystems. The expressions are always in more poetic, life-like, and objective ways.

*Flavour of the Green Betelnut* [10] depicts a girl named Lichun, her rethinking, resistance and escape to the primary identity of the Li minority. Lichun lives in an autonomous county of Li minority in Hainan province. She encounters the upcoming high school entry test, but she is tired of studying and not good at English-learning. One of her best friends goes to the local folk-cultural resort to work as a dancer after dropping out of school. At the same time, Lichun's older sister, Liqui, divorces Wang Qinglin, a primary school teacher in the village, because they are not able to have a child. So, Liqui left the village and went to the mainland. A series of uncertainties around Lichun pushes her to a turning point, so she is bothered by pending issues: should she go to work as a dancer in the resort, or stay in school, and being annoyed by family trifles.

In many ways, a personification of her ethnical identification is also near a transformation. The Li minority follows a traditionally matriarchal society, and although this tradition is fading, female family members are responsible for important determination. Because of this, Lichun is given liberty to make her own decisions and act independently, and the director gives her enough 'space' to think deeply and act rebelliously. Lichun is a restless girl who only does what she desires, and is easily influenced by information and stimulation from the outside, so she always to seek happiness and express her extreme likes and dislikes directly. Most of her choices are influenced by events have happened around her, and she can foresee some part of her future in Liqui's experience, that Lichun may flee from home and school, and to pursues so-called freedom. Her former brother-in-law, Wang, stays in the village as a primary school teacher, who opens up a night school at home for students to learn their mother tongue, the Hlai language. Lichun has a strong attachment to the mother-tongue-speaking, so she helps Wang every night. More than this, Lichun passion is spurred by her

admiration and uncertain feelings for Wang, because Wang attempts to keep the Hlai language from disappearing causes feelings that resonate in her mind. While Wang accepts her kindness and assistance, but they still maintain a distance, because he is rejective to Lichun's ambiguous love behaviours.

Excepting the depiction to life-like characters and their normal desires, the filmmaker delivers a view that the mother tongue is embodied with the Lhai culture. However, Lichun's attitude toward the Hlai language and cultural identity is radical and mainly reflected by her behaviours. Lichun refuses to study English (one of the required courses of compulsory education) in class and translates news reports from putonghua to Hlai language for village elders. Although Lichun's actions to portray her resistance to Hanization are childish and useless in preserving the disappearing Hlai culture and language, this character is the imagery of the idea of resistance. However, her transformation of mentality comes rapidly. Wang's night school does not have any students, because most students' parents consider that since the Hlai language is not included in school examinations, but English is, their children should not spend much time and money on it. At the same time, Liqui returns to the village with pregnancy, but she refuses to say who the father of her child is. However, Wang ruthlessly agrees to disregard his previous unhappiness and accept her and the child.

All the unexpected events make Lichun aimless and even more self-doubtful, and the current lifelessness of the village has gradually made her escape from reality. Her experiences reflect her powerlessness, and everything is different from what she expected. The relinquishment of Wang's class alludes a disappearance of Lhai culture and language. It tends to be a destined result. Also, Wang's ambiguity to Lichun's unspoken confession and his inconstancy to the morality (Wang remarries Liqui) demolishes Lichun's previous impression and identity to her living circumstance of the village. Finally, Lichun selects her own way, drops out of school and becomes a dancer at the resort. The folk performance can bring her to be closer to the 'ethnicity' and freedom she imagined, which may also be compared with the education of local school, the resort is a new carrier of Hlai culture. Escape is her final answer, and she is trying to get rid of her original understanding of a Lhai ethnicity. However, Lichun's choice does not mean any sacrifice or compromise, but the most actual decision a rebellious teenager girl can make, which is a symbol of the return to the value of individualism.

In addition, *Flavour of Green Betelnut* focuses on the relationship minority individuals and living circumstance. Lichun stays in an enclosed dimension, a small village with the same school, same village and same house inside, but she is being transformed by information flow beyond these time and space boundaries. She and her small settlement are changing. Lichun is not a allegorical role to the film, because she is unable to metaphor changes of the past and future of Lhai minority, but this character reflects some aspects of beliefs and understandings of own ethnicity of minority

youngsters.

*The Taste of Rice Flower* [11] is about a mother-daughter relationship under the motif of the nostalgic attachment to hometown. Single mother Ye Nan returns to her home, a small autonomous village in southern Yunnan province, after leaving a big city. Once she arrives home, Ye Nan has two problems. Firstly, she has to endure criticism from the villagers, because she gives the birth to a daughter without a father. Secondly, she has to figure out how to manage the terrible relationship with her rebellious daughter, Nan Hang. The essay-like film follows a naturalistic expression, with all the confrontation between Ye Nan and Nan Hang dramatized as light comedy. *The Taste of Rice Flower* does not bring two roles into a situation full of conflicts but uses counter-narrative methods to demonstrate Ye Nan's attempts to look for solutions.

Ye Nan represents migrant workers in modern China, who are among the vastest floating populations to enter cities. At the same time, Nan Hang sketches an image of left-behind children and the number of left-behind children in rural areas has increased rapidly since the beginning of this century. Most left-behind children have mental problems during their growth, like Nan Hang, she skips class, is obsessed with video games and tells lies. This is mainly because of Ye Nan's absence from her life, and the mother fails to use a suitable way to communicate with her. As a result, Ye Nan expects to ask for Nan Hang's forgiveness, to make up for her unfinished obligations. But Nan Hang becomes more dissatisfied and rejects her mother's discipline. This mother-daughter interaction is performed like a comedic scene. Protagonists are placed inside the everydayness, and their contesting relationships and interdependence are gradually revealed by the change of various scenes in the film.

Ye Nan chronically maintains a distance with this remote Dai village but keeps a spiritual connection with here. So a deeper meaning of Ye Nan's return is a repair of connection between a culturally-exiled individual and the initial cultural sphere. The scene in this Dai village is a continuum of old rural traditions and modern spectacle, which has unique aesthetic values. Most of the residents maintain old Dai-style in living habit, dress codes, and religious customs. The village is close to nature, so agriculture is still the main mode of production, with human settlement and natural landscape intertwined throughout. Meanwhile, some small clues remind us of the location and hidden connection between the village and the outside world. Local residents' lives are gradually being reshaped by popular culture, and the old ways are changing slightly. For instance, children sit on the stairs outside the temple and playing video games, and on the farm road between two croplands, cars have to make way for a carriage. However, the natural reconciliation between Ye Nan and Nan Hang comes from Nan Hang's 'disrespectfulness to the local god'. Nan Hang steals flowers outside the temple, and she is blamed offensive to God. The village sorceress purposely pretends to be possessed by the ghost of the ancestor, to warn against Nan Hang's stealing, who says: 'This rice cake tastes bad, unlikely to the old-time', the possessed

sorceress says. The rice cake is one of the tributes to the tablets of the ancestors; the witch's word is an allusion for reality, changing the taste of rice cake, which means the influence of religion on the daily life of residences of this village is weakened. Finally, the villagers agree that to appease God, they must worship Buddha in an ancient cave which local authorities had turned into a ticket-selling tourist spot and were not open on weekends. After Nan Hang smashes the lock, the villagers get access to the holy place. The last scene of this film is a dancing and singing ceremony of sacrifice, prepared for the reconciliation of the mother and daughter. Ye Nan and Nan Hang dance in the central region of the cave, like two peacocks. To Ye Nan, the peacock dance alludes a return of belongingness and cultural identity, a retrospection of ethnic art and belief. The influence on thoughts from religion is limited, like Tapp [12] clarifies, modern people still believe in religion, and although the knowledge and consciousness of the ancestors have been lost. This is still a mental sustenance of the Dai people, and represents their nostalgia for their ethnicity and family.

### III. CONCLUSION

The aforementioned three types are more likely to be the three steps of transformation that are consistent with the creative principle of Fourth Cinema. As Barclay [2, p.6] argues, the camera of Fourth Cinema, rather than being fixedly placed in the area, is 'held by the people for whom ashore is their ancestral home.' Of course, it is not an easily represented perspective of using 'the other' to gaze at indigenous civilizations, but rather a concern with tradition and connectedness with the origin and cultural sphere, both internal and external, the creative subjective comes back to filmmakers. Most of them are minority members who are able to convey a relatively reliable depiction of their familiar culture. The Fourth Cinema theory stresses the purity and integrity of culture and minority members' subjecthood and reflexivity to creation. It can reflect a recent and real status of Chinese minority-centred film, also a resistance to the mainstream Hanized culture within the minority settled regions.

On the one hand, Fourth Cinema theory concerns aspects under the surface, how the inner structure of minority film discourse is portrayed, which encourages highlighting the variety and uniqueness of minorities. Once the right of expression is given back to the people, the discussion about ethnic spirit will come more into line. At the same time, it figures out the necessity of personal narrative in this type of work. The nationalistic perspective and non-collective narrative have differences when judging the 'irreplaceability' of individuals whose moral values and selection can reflect the degree of acceptance and recognition of some 'additional meaning' for ethnic minorities, such as ethnicity, moral values, religion, and social reality. Also, some emotional-level transformations, such as loneliness and hesitation and a sense of uprootedness, are based on a modern perspective. On the other hand, the relationship between the Han nation and non-

Han minorities is a problem of cultural regionalization in China also known as Hanization, which is restrictive. Most importantly, the language in the filmmaking should be the first problem, and encouraging the use of minority mother tongues during filming is a form of resistance to a mandatory national policy. Mandarin provides convenience for Chinese people's barrier-breaking communication, but also creates a crisis of vanishing minor dialects, who will not be able to be culturally minoritized again. The Mandarin-speaking requirement deprives the needs of mother tongue and leads to a lack of ability in minority language usage. Chinese cultural regionalization is actually an expansion of Han culture, rather the insistence on multiculturalism, which is more likely to be regarded as a chauvinistic-like inflation of modern Han culture and morality. The beautiful image of constructing a unified multi-ethnic country has been overestimated. Although quite a number of minority culture-preserving policies have been applied, it is difficult to balance the 'annexation' from Han culture with minorities across boundaries. Fourth World/Cinema theory may provide a new way of negotiation by individualizing the experiences and points of views.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The special and largest gratefulness to great supervisor Prof. Kenny Ng, whose kindness and patience motivated this progress. Also with a huge thankfulness to the lady who is mentally supportive to this work, Dr. Xiaqing Pu.

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