

Migration and Mobility of Hmong-Miao in China

Becky Vang ❖ University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire



Purpose of Research

This research was based on the roots and background history about the Hmong identity. In general, the origin of the Hmong is said to be China; however, there is little documentation. Based on this information I went to China to figure out the historical and contemporary differences and/or similarities between the Hmong and Miao, as well as broader questions about Hmong social life in general.

Research Question

- ❖ Main focus;
 - ❖ Migration and mobility of the Hmong-Miao families/people
- ❖ Sub-questions asked;
 - ❖ Where did peoples' grandparents live?
 - ❖ When and where do people think their ancestors lived?
 - ❖ If they lived in other places, then why did they migrate, and how?
 - ❖ Where specifically, and in what kinds of regions, did they settle?



Methodology

- ❖ Participant Observation
 - ❖ Observing and participating in the activities of the Hmong-Miao families visited/commuted to
- ❖ Interview
 - ❖ One on one interviews with villagers/local people
 - ❖ Discussions with elders and other local people on different aspects of village and city tradition, history and social life
- ❖ Identifying/Coding Data
 - ❖ Communication was mostly in Hmong with villagers/local people
 - ❖ Debrief with mentors and colleagues to help understand and code data



Findings

- ❖ Reasons why Hmong-Miao families stayed in their villages
 - ❖ Government funding
 - ❖ The Chinese government would give a sum of money to minorities to improve their habitat or surroundings to make their living more modern and stable
 - ❖ Plantation/Traditions
 - ❖ Many Hmong-Miao stay in their villages because of farming and to keep their livestock's available to them instead of traveling far away for food
 - ❖ Many Hmong-Miao also stay because they are used to farm life
 - ❖ Many also want to keep the closeness of families together by helping each other out and maintaining the family name
- ❖ Reasons as to why Hmong-Miao families moved away from their villages
 - ❖ Water/food
 - ❖ Because of the poor water quality, villagers moved to different areas to find cleaner water and more food to keep families from starvation
 - ❖ Bad habitat
 - ❖ Construction of roads are poor in China
 - ❖ Many Hmong-Miao families live in the mountainous areas of China and the roads are mainly dirt roads
 - ❖ Its gets harder for families to travel because of dirt roads

Implications

Hmong-Miao families want to stay in their villages, but because the Chinese government wants to modernize minorities, Hmong-Miao families are moving towards a more structured city life. In addition, Hmong-Miao families send their children to the cities to go to school while the older family members stay back and work on the plantations. Hmong-Miao families want to keep their tradition and embrace their culture while trying to keep up with the modernized world.

Acknowledgements

I would like to give my thanks to AsiaNetwork for funding this research and for making this a dream come true. If not for their funding this research would not have been a reality. In addition, my thanks also goes out to Ezra Zeitler and Kelly Wonder for their patience, effort, and their hard work for being such great mentors. Furthermore, I would also like to acknowledge Ari Anand, Christin DePouw, Charles Vue, and Ka Vang in making this research possible.



Photo References

"Yunnan Travel Guide: Yunnan Tour, Map, Ethnic Minority Groups." *TravelChinaGuide*. N.p., 1998. Web. 23 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.travelchinaguide.com/cityguides/yunnan/>>.