Research Notes from the Field: Tracing the Path of The Ancestors – A Visit to the Hmong in China

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Abstract

This paper consists of personal research notes collected by a Hmong-American scholar during a 2004 visit to Miao communities in China. The author provides his personal observations related to conditions in Miao villages and cultural and social exchanges between Hmong-Americans and Miao. A short related discussion is provided of what is known of Miao history and the status of Miao in contemporary China. The author supplements his informal observations with photos taken during the visit.

Introduction

In the Hmong Diaspora of the Post-War Period, Kou Yang (2003: 296) writes:

> Many Hmong Americans continue to guide the souls of their loved ones to return to China, the land of their ancestors. Many elders continue to tell their children and grandchildren stories and songs of the Hmong and the Yellow River… the River that only exists in their oral stories or songs. Many Hmong [American] individuals have [recently] gone to study and visit China. Some of them have gone to where no Hmong outside of China has ever gone before … to visit the Ci You tomb, believing it to be the tomb of the ancient king of the Miao in China (and possibly the Hmong king as well). Other individuals have visited some Hmong historical sites, such as the South Wall in China, which was built by Han rulers to separate the Miao from the Han — the wall that their parents have never heard of.

These pages of informal research notes attempt to provide an example of what and how Hmong Americans learn about their history and connect to their Miao[i] cousins in China. The paper begins by providing a brief overview of the history of the exchange between the Hmong in the United States and their cousins in China. The second part covers the geographical setting of the areas visited by the Fulbright-Hay Group Project,[ii] the areas that are home to the largest concentration of the Miao in China. The third section outlines notes from the trip to China, and finally, a short discussion of Miao history and the status of Miao in contemporary China concludes the essay.

In 2004, the author of the notes provided in this essay led a group of university professors, K-12 teachers, and students through a one-month educational tour of China, mainly in the Southwest region, home to the majority of the Miao in China, who live in the Guizhou and Yunnan provinces. The one-month educational tour was designed to allow the participants to study China, its land, and its people. The focus was on the relationship between the minority and majority people of China, and the Miao were singled out as a case study.

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The Miao in China

The Miao are the fifth largest of the fifty-six Chinese nationalities, following the Han, Zhuang, Manchu, and Hui. The term minority in this paper is defined as "a subordinate group whose members have significantly less control or power over their own lives than do members of a dominant or the majority group" (Schaefer, 2000: 6). There are four major groups that are lumped under the name, Miao, and they are Goshiong/Guoxiong, Hmu, Ah Hmao, and Hmong. According to Gu Wenfeng, Chinese linguists classify the Miao into three major language groups: Eastern or Western Hunan, Central or Eastern Guizhou, and Western or the Sichuan, Guizhou and Yunnan languages. What follows are discussions of each one of the four major groups.

The Goshiong or Guoxiong is probably the most educated and economically stable of the other Miao subgroups. They live mostly in Hunan province. Song Zhuying, one of the most well-known Chinese singers, is from Hunan and a member of the Goshiong subgroup. Song Zhuying is one of the most recognized faces in today's China as she sings patriotic songs in almost every major national event in China. Wu Xiaoping, who has visited the Hmong in the United States many times, is also from Hunan. In general, Qoshiong or Guoxiong speak in the eastern or western Hunan branch, and the central branch of the Miao language.

In the past, Chinese documents distinguished between the cooked and raw Miao. For example, Chinese literature from the Qing Dynasty refers to raw Miao as those Miao who live in western Hunan. Gu Wenfeng suggested that the cooked Miao had been mostly assimilated. For example, there are many villages in Mayang County in the Hunan Province, who call themselves "Miao", but retain few aspects of the Miao culture and language. Quincy (1995:16) describes the cooked Miao as those "who had assimilated into Chinese culture and settled in the lowlands, and were living among the Chinese. The raw Hmong [Miao] live up in the mountains and had never accepted Chinese ways." Although Hebei has only a small population of Miao, one of its Vice-Governors is a Miao. Long Zhunagwei, a Vice-Governor of Hebei, is a Miao and native of Enshi Prefecture, Hubei Province.

The Hmu live mostly in southeast Guizhou in the Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Prefecture. They have well known and admired costumes. Professors Li Jinping, who belongs to the Hmu, explained to the group during his lecture about Miao history that silver ornaments of the Hmu can cost up to three thousand US dollars or more. Many Hmu girls wear the silver buffalo horns during their major festivities. Many of today's leaders in Guizhou, such as Wang Chaowen, the former Governor of Guizhou, are Hmu. Generally, the Hmu speak the Central or Eastern Guizhou branch of the Miao language family.

The Ah Hmao live in northeast Yunnan and northwest Guizhou. The Chinese generally refer to this group as the Big Flowery Miao. The Ah Hmao speak the North-eastern sub-branch, which belongs to the western branch of the Miao language.

The Hmong live mostly in Sichuan, Guizhou, and Yunnan. A small group of the Hmong also live in Guangxi, near the border of Vietnam. The Hmong in Southeast Asia and the West belong to this group. In China, this group tends to be poorer than the Hmu and Goshiong. Many Miao scholars in China explained to this author that the Hmong, which are also known as the Western Miao, tend to be poorer because they were historically the most rebellious against the Ming and Qing Imperial Government. Theoretically, they belong to the raw Miao and so do most of the other groups of the Miao. In the past, members of this group had a tendency to join rebellions because they were among the poorest and had nothing to lose when joining the rebels. If they joined a rebellion, they were subjected to suppression, oppression, and being chased out of their villages and lands. Those, who survived the rebellion, found themselves landless and were left to settle in places no one had yet claimed. These places tended to have the most inhospitable climate and poor soil. During the field visits, this author and the group visited one very poor village outside of Anshun City. Members of this village belonged to the Hmong group and shared a similar language with the Hmong of Southeast Asia and the West. This author observed these villagers to be very poor. Their poverty was the result of living in an area with poor soil. In the past, people from this village could not find food to feed themselves throughout the year, so they had to move from field to field or place to place to gather food for their survival. They were so poor economically, socially and spiritually, that many members of the Fulbright-Hay Group were very saddened and almost every member of the group donated money to help these villagers. In recent years, the Guizhou Government has attempted to build better houses and has introduced several programs, some agricultural, including a tree nursery, to these poor Hmong in hope that their social and economic situation will follow the rest of Guizhou. The Hmong in Yunnan have more contact with those in the west and many names of the Hmong in Yunnan are well known to Hmong Americans. Some of these names are Xiang Chaozong (Hang Chaozong), Yang Kaiyi, Xiong Youyao, and Gu Wenfeng. The Hmong speak the western branch of the Miao language.

Although the author has had very little contact and knowledge of the Miao in Sichuan, Hebei, and Guangxi, it is noted that one of the Vice-Governors of Hebei is a Miao. Shi Bangding, the Vice-Chairman of the Guizhou Provincial Writers' Association, is a native of Sichuan Province. He is a prize-winning writer of short stories, and an active voice for the development and promotion of literary talent among Chinese ethnic minorities. Dr. Shi Maoming, who has met with many Hmong Americans visiting Beijing, is also from

Sichuan. In 1987 and 1988, this author visited the Miao in Jingxi, Guangxi Zhaung Autonomous Region, and their language was found to be very similar to that spoken in Laos. Of all the Miao the author met in China, those in Jingxi appear to be linguistically closer to those in Laos and the west. Within each of the four major subgroups above, there are many mini-subgroups. For example, the Hmong group includes Hmong, Mong, and Small Flowery Hmong. Many of these mini-subgroups even refer to themselves using various names. Some past scholars have classified Hmong groups based on their costumes and clothing. A short list of such classifications includes the Long Skirt, Short Skirt, White, Black, Red, Blue and Flowery Miao. Others are named based on where they live, whether nearby a river or on the highlands.

The Han, who are the majority, represent about ninety-four percent of China's population. The fifty-five Chinese ethnic minorities represent only six percent of China's 1.3 billion people. The Miao are the fourth largest of the fifty-five Chinese ethnic minorities, and the number of their population is not agreeable to everyone. Many Miao professors estimate the Miao population in China to be approximately ten million, but the Fourth [Chinese] National Census, which was conducted in 1990, counted them to be about 7,383,600. It is very possible that, by the year 2005, the Miao population in China will have reached ten million, given the fact that their population has increased eighty-nine percent from the 1982 Census to the 1990 Census. It has grown from 5,036,377 to 7,383,600. This population increase is not just a result of fertility, but other factors as well. For example, many people were not counted in the 1982 Census, and quite a few who were Miao or Miao descendants did not claim their ethnic identity then. Since 1982, many people have claimed to be minorities or Miao because of recent government policies providing incentives to minorities. Overall, Guizhou Province has about one half of the Miao population in China. Yunnan Province has the second largest, about nine-hundred thousand, followed by Hunan (600,000), Sichuan (600,000), Guangxi (500,000), Hubei (250,000) and Hainan (60,000).

The Term Miao and Its Controversy

As mentioned above, the term Miao is the official Chinese [lumping] term used to refer to several subgroups believed to share a common culture and history. In Chinese, the term Miao has two characters: [] and []. Together, these two characters are pronounced "Miao" "苗". The first character is a symbol of a field and the second character represents a young shoot (and perhaps a young rice shoot). Because of these two characters, some people speculate that the early Chinese might have used these characters as a name for the people they believed to be the first agriculturalists in Central China. Although these two characters do not appear to contain negative connotations, the social stigma and stereotypes

attached to the name might have developed throughout thousands of years of isolation and past mistrust between the Han Chinese majority and the Miao people (and other minorities) in China. Moreover, many Hmong reject and object to the name, Miao, because it is the name or label given to them by outsiders. The labeling and discrimination against minorities, including the Miao, has been well documented in Chinese history. Jenks (1994) cites the "Miao Album," as an example of Chinese documents containing the Han Chinese majority's stereotypes and discriminations against the Chinese minorities. Such "Labeling" has often been used to stereotype and pre-judge ethnic and racial minority groups (Schaefer, 2000) from the past to the present.

As I have noted, among the Miao in China there are four major groups: Goshiong, Hmu, Ah Hmao, and Hmong. Because the Hmong are only one of the four major groups, it is not accurate to use the term, "Hmong" to refer to all of the four subgroups under Miao. Although the dialogue between the four subgroups as to which term is the most conclusive and acceptable term to all, has not yet officially started, the many contacts by the Hmong in the West, such as the visit of this author, has indirectly influenced the idea of having a mutually agreeable term to include all subgroups. The determination of which term to use, however, should only be made by members of these four subgroups. At the time being, the Miao in China continue to use the term, "Miao" for several reasons. It is the official term used by the Government of the People's Republic of China and it is used throughout China. Secondly, it can be a politically unified term that includes all subgroups. Corrigan (2002:130) observes that "Miao scholars believe they should be classified according to the name they give themselves in their own language."

This author also notes that many scholars of Miao ancestry do not like the term Miao, but they and many Miao leaders appear to be hesitant to discuss the idea of changing this term. One of the fears is that the change may lead to major divisions among the Miao. Recent debates about the Hmong and Mong in the United States have raised a concern among many Miao leaders in China about divisions within the many subgroups of the Miao. In contrast, many young Hmong Americans, such as Tou T. Yang, say, "*Without controversy and debate, there is no generation of ideas and thus there is no progress. On the other hand, a division without an acceptable compromise can cause the destruction of a community*." Although debating an idea or ideas is the basic principle and foundation of democracy, it is a concept that is very western in nature and might not be suitable in all societies, especially in China and the rest of Asia.

History of the Visits of Hmong Overseas to the Miao Inside China

Since 1975, the Hmong living outside of China have been continuously visiting China and the Miao residing there. In 1975, Dr. Yang Dao visited China as a member of a delegation of the Provisionary Coalition Government of Laos. He met with a few Miao in Beijing, but was not a guest of the Miao in China. In 1986-87, Kou Yang spent six months studying, teaching, and traveling in many parts of China as an exchange student and teacher. He spent the last two weeks of his visit with the Miao in Yunnan and Guangxi. This was the first time a Hmong living outside of China came to study and teach in China, taking time to learn more about the Miao there. After Kou Yang returned to the United States with news about the Miao in China, he published an article about his visit in *Haiv Hmong,* a magazine published in the Hmong language. As a result of this and China's open door policy, many Hmong Americans began to learn about their cousins in China and started to visit China. As China became more open in the late 1980s, the Miao in China were at liberty to contact the Hmong in the West and more Hmong Americans and Hmong French were able to visit China. The visit of Hmong Americans to China during the late 1980s was still very limited. Only a few Hmong individuals and groups visited the Hmong in China and their visits tended to be limited to the Hmong in Kunming and Wenshan in Yunnan. A more significant visit came in the 1988, when the Miao in Beijing invited Dr. Yang Dao and his delegation (among which this author was a member) to visit them in Beijing and Yunnan and Guizhou. They also invited another delegation from France. This marked the first time the Miao in China were officially hosts of their Hmong cousins from overseas. At the Beijing International Airport, a group of Miao professors and students held a sign welcoming the Hmong from America. This visit is what expanded the bridge between the Miao in China
and the Hmong in the United States, and it broadened knowledge and mutual understanding between them. Following this visit, more Hmong Americans went to China, and many young Hmong Americans married young Miao Chinese and brought their spouses to the United States.

Subsequently, some Miao in Yunnan, China began to visit the United States by sending musicians and singers to the Hmong American New Year during the 1990s. Many Hmong individuals and groups also visited China and attended the Miao New Year and conferences. A few of them also went there to explore business opportunities. A few other Hmong American visitors made videos about the Hmong in China and marketed their videos to the Hmong in the west. As the relationship among the people of the two countries became stronger, numerous incidents of misunderstanding and cultural clashes also surfaced. The author of this essay and several friends visited China in 1993, and were guests of the 30th Anniversary of the proclamation of Pingpian County as "Miao Autonomous County." Pingpian County is in the Honghe region,

sharing a border with Laos. It was declared as a Miao Autonomous County in 1963 because it has a large population of Miao ancestry. This author spent a few days in Pingpian and met with many local Miao officials, whose language was very similar to the one of the Hmong in Laos. There was no need for an interpreter. The author also visited a Miao village and many Miao families, and found the Miao villagers in Southern China to be as hospitable as the Hmong in Laos and Thailand. After visiting Pingpian County, this author passed through the border of China, Laos, and Vietnam, traveling to Wenshan, another region with a high concentration of Miao population. Wenshan is the capital of the Wenshan Zhuang and Miao Autonomous Prefecture. As in Pingpian, the author needed no interpreter to exchange ideas with the Miao in Wenshan. Although they had a minor accent, they all spoke in a dialect belonging to the Western branch of the Miao language. In both Wenshan and Pingpian counties, the author learned that very few Miao lived in the city, but rather mostly dwelt in the suburban or rural areas. Many Miao, who lived in the city, worked for the local or central government. In both Wenshan and Pingpian, this author met with Hmong American tourists visiting the areas. By this time, Hmong Americans needed no guide because they were able to travel on their own and had befriended Miao in China who were willing to guide them, if necessary, in Southern China.

The influences extended both directions. The author found one factory in Pingpian that made Miao costumes and textiles, and two other factories in Wenshan that manufactured Miao Chinese clothes. The one in Pingpian was owned and operated by the state. The two factories in Wenshan were jointly ventured factories between the Miao in Wenshan and Hmong American entrepreneurs. Most of the clothes were for the Hmong American market in the United States. By this time, Hmong American teenagers had become a large representation of the Hmong American population, and they had a strong demand for different styles of clothing for the Hmong New Year. The Miao Chinese costumes became the most popular and affordable items at the time. Many teenagers and their parents became consumers of costumes made from China. Additionally, a few singers from Wenshan attending the Hmong American New Year in Fresno brought their costumes directly to the Hmong American community in the 1990s.

The influence of Hmong Americans on the Miao in China has also been strong. In 1987, this author visited Kunming and was a guest of a prominent Miao Kunming family. This family had a son and a daughter. The son was a college student and the daughter was a senior in high school. Both children were unable to speak Miao because their parents were government officials and lived without Miao neighbors.

When this author visited them again in 1993, the father was able to write and read the Hmong written language known as the Romanized Phonetic Alphabet (RPA), and he used this language to write to the Hmong in the United States. The two children had also learned to speak Miao (Western Branch or Hmong) fairly well, with a Hmong American accent. The girl eventually married a Hmong American and immigrated to the United States.

Occasionally, difficulties have surfaced between individual Hmong Americans and their Miao cousins in China. For example, during the 2004 visit to the Miao in Yunnan, many Miao officials expressed their concerns to this author about the problems between the Hmong of the United States and the Miao in China. They listed several cases. One of them involved a Hmong American man who often travels to Yunnan and is very close friends with a married Miao woman. It is said that many started to believe that the two were having an extramarital affair. Her husband and his family were very unhappy about their relationship. Another case involved a Hmong American businessman who operated a business project in Yunnan in the 1990s. This businessman borrowed money from a prominent Miao family in Yunnan with a promise to repay in full. After his business failed, he returned to the United States and disappeared. There have been other cases involving misrepresentations and misunderstandings. A prominent Miao official in Yunnan complained to this author in 1993 that some Hmong Americans who visited him claimed to be leaders or persons that they were not.

Overall, many Miao officials in Yunnan agree that a bridge has been built and many Miao in Yunnan do benefit from visits and knowing about the Hmong in the West. One young Miao scholar cited a village in Yunnan as an example of this kind of influence and benefit. In the early 1990s, several Hmong Americans visited a Miao village south of Kunming. The village was very poor, but was located on a main road to the area. Many Hmong Americans suggested that the villagers take advantage of the road to enhance their economic and educational situation. Their suggestion encouraged villagers to market their goods and services to those passing by. These Hmong Americans not only gave advice, but also provided the villagers with a small amount of capital. Many villagers took the advice and have since become self-sufficient.

Notes from the 2004 Trip to China

The following notes were compiled from the four major components of the one-month educational tour program of the Fulbright-Hay Group Project to China: observations, field visits, classroom lectures, and interaction. Being a Hmong and leader of the group, the author has had the privilege to meet with many Miao and Han Chinese studies groups, scholars, and government officials. These meetings, formal and informal contacts provided the author with many perspectives regarding the history of the Hmong and contemporary issues relating to the Miao in China. These few pages of notes and the inserted photos are put together to give readers a glimpse of how Hmong Americans learn about and re-construct their history and re-connect to their past as well as their contemporary Miao cousins in China. This paper, however represents only one small effort toward documenting the Hmong and Miao's five thousand year-history and diasporic experience. It is not a complete picture, but an outline of notes and questions to further explore the experience of the Miao.

The Fulbright-Hay Group Project to China

The group visiting China was composed of thirteen people, including this author. Seven of them were Hmong Americans. Of the seven, four were born in Laos, one in a refugee camp in Thailand, and two in the United States. The four Lao-born Hmong Americans speak, write and read Hmong fluently and two of them can also sing traditional Hmong songs. The two American-born speak Hmong fairly well, but the Thai born speaks Hmong with some difficulty. He, however, understands Hmong fairly well. Of these seven Hmong Americans, one is a university professor, three are k-12 teachers, one a doctoral student, and the other two are beginning their graduate studies. All of them can interact with Miao in China, who speak their language, which is a Western branch of the Miao language family. There are three main languages in the Miao language family: Eastern, Central and Western languages. The majority of the Miao in China speak the Central and Eastern Miao languages, which are different from those of the Western branch. When speaking to Miao of the Eastern or Central languages, members of the group usually speak in Mandarin Chinese or use an interpreter who can speak English.

The Geographical Setting

The educational tour focused on the Yunnan and Guizhou provinces and their people, using the Miao as a case study. Yunnan is a Chinese province bordering Vietnam and Laos to the South and Thailand and Myanmar (Burma) to the Southwest. The province also borders Guangxi, Guizhou, Tibet, and Sichuan provinces. Yunnan is a mountainous area. The majority of its more than forty million people live in the rural and remote mountain areas. Yunnan, which means "South of the Clouds," has the most ethnically diverse

population in China. The province is home to about twenty-five ethnic groups who represent approximately thirty percent of the total Yunnan population. These Yunnan ethnic minorities include Achang, Bai, Bouyei, Blang, Dai, Deang, Drung, Hani, Miao, Hui, Jingpo, Jino, Lahu, Lisu, Manchu, Mien/Yao, Mongolian, Naxi, Nu, Pumi, Va, Shui, Tibetan, Yi, and Zhuang. Ancestors of the Hmong in Southeast Asia come mostly from the Yunnan province, so the Hmong in Southeast Asia share many similarities with some of the numerous sub-groups of the Miao in Yunnan, especially language, costumes, and certain traditions. About nine hundred thousand of the estimated ten million Miao in China live in Yunnan. There is no Miao autonomous prefecture in Yunnan. Both the Zhuang and Miao share the Wenshan Zhuang and Miao Autonomous Prefecture. There are three autonomous counties in Yunnan that are officially designated as Miao autonomous counties. These three counties are Pingpian, Jinping, and Lugan.

A very large population of the Miao in Yunnan is concentrated near the border of Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar. Before the Secret War in Laos or before 1960, many Hmong in Laos and China traveled back and forth between the two countries. Many Hmong immigrated to Laos from China as recently as the middle of the twentieth century. During his visit to China in 1987 and 1988, this author met several Hmong in Guangxi, whose language was the same as those of the Hmong of Southeast Asia, and they related that they have distant relatives in Southeast Asia, France, and the United States. In 1993, an elderly Hmong Chinese person, who lived near the border of Laos and Vietnam, informed this author that some of his relatives moved back from Laos to China before the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

Guizhou, unlike Yunnan, has no border with a foreign country. It is located in the Southwestern part of China, bordered by the Chinese provinces of Yunnan to the west, Guangxi to the south, Hunan to the east, and Sichuan to the north. According to Corrigan (2002), Guizhou has a population of about thirty-six million and is one of the most ethnically diverse provinces in China. Guizhou has about seventeen ethnic groups, who represent approximately thirty-five percent of the total population of the province. Guizhou is home to about five million Miao people, representing one half of all Miao Chinese. Guizhou, like Yunnan, is mountainous, with most of its land made up of mountains and plateaus. There is a saying that the Han live on the lowland or valley floors, the Miao live in the highlands or mountains, and the Yi and Bouyei live between the Miao and the Han. The many ethnic groups of Guizhou include Bai, Bouyei, Dong, Gejia, Gelao, Miao, Shui, Tujia, and Yi. As in Yunnan, the minorities of Guizhou are not racial ethnicities, but cultural and religious groups. Racially, there is no difference between the Han majority and the minorities in Guizhou. The Hui are the religious minority as they are Muslims. The other minority groups are ethnic cultural minorities as

most of them have their own language and culture. An ethnic group is a "group of people who are generally recognized by themselves and/or by others as a distinct group, with such recognition based on social or cultural characteristics. The most common of these characteristics are nationality, language, and religion" (Farley, 1995: 6).

Since 1949, the Government of the People's Republic of China has proclaimed many counties, prefectures, and regions as ethnic autonomous regions. If the population of the county has a large population of one ethnic group, for example, the Miao, that county will be declared a Miao Autonomous County. There are two autonomous prefectures that the Miao in Guizhou share with other ethnic groups. These prefectures are "Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture" and "Qiannan Bouyei and Miao Autonomous Prefecture." Songdao, Yingjiang and Wuchuan are the only three counties in Guizhou that are officially designated as "Miao Autonomous Counties." Many well-known former and current Guizhou Provincial officials are from Qiandongnan. Wang Chaowen, the former Governor of Guizhou Province, for example, is a native of Huangping, Qiandongnan, and is very influential in this region. Wang Zhengfu, the Executive Vice-Governor of Guizhou Province is a native and former Mayor of Kaili, the capital of Qiangdonan Miao and Dong Prefecture.

The Field Visits

The Fulbright-Hay Group spent seven days in Yunnan as guests of the Yunnan Ethnology Institute. The host and main contact person was Professor Gu Wenfeng, a Hmong and faculty member of the Ethnology Institute. Professor Gu speaks a dialect from the western branch of the Miao language. As noted above, this is the same language spoken by the Hmong in Southeast Asia and the west, except the accent is somewhat different. Because of her dialect, the seven of the thirteen members of the group who were Hmong Americans could understand her about fifty percent of the time. Additionally, many Miao in Yunnan have been to the United States or have met with many Hmong Americans, so they understand the language of the Hmong in the West very well. One of those Yunnan Hmong that this author met had a daughter in the United States, and he had been to the United States numerous times. Additionally, he had been to Laos once and had been a host to many Hmong from Laos during the previous five years.

The Fulbright-Hay group visited many places in Yunnan, including one Miao village. In this village, members of the group were actually guests of four villages. Three nearby Miao villages came to a welcoming ceremony and hosted the Fulbright-Hay group. The welcoming ceremony was very touching and a culturally enriching experience, especially for the young Hmong Americans who know so little about their traditional

culture and way of life. On the two sides of the road leading to the village, villagers played various musical instruments, including the Qeej welcoming the group to their village. The elders and several young people stood in front of the village gate to welcome the group. After the welcoming ceremony, members of the group were led to the center of the village or multipurpose grounds, where villagers celebrate festivities and the young people played basketball. The group sat in a semi-circle to have a good view of all of the performances offered to the group by the villagers. As soon as the members of the group sat down, the village chief gave a welcoming speech, and then the performances began. Performers from the four Miao villages offered the group their best music, dances, and Qeej playing. Compared to Hmong Americans or those from Southeast Asia, Miao have a wider array of uses for the Qeej and its music. They use the Qeej for many purposes, such as welcoming, farewells, entertaining guests, courtship and funeral rituals.

After the performance, the group was free to talk to villagers or walk around the village. Most of the Hmong Americans chose to talk to the villagers, many of whom were musicians and dancers. They tested each other's language and did small Hmong talk, such as asking for their names, clan names and their families, and so on. They began to explore their languages and the words that they have in common and those that differ.

Guizhou province was the group's next stop. The first part of the Guizhou program was a classroom lecture about Chinese history, minority history, and culture from Professors affiliated with the Guizhou University for Ethnic Minorities. The second part involved several field trips to visit minority villages, tourist sites, and towns that have a large concentration of minorities, to observe the interaction between the majority and minority.

The first trip in Guizhou was a visit to Anshun, a large tourist city near the famous Huanguoshu Waterfall. Anshun City is about two hours driving distance from Guiyang, the Capital of Anshun Prefecture and one of the largest cities in Guizhou. Anshun City has a population of a little less than one million. It is an ancient trade city, trading tea in its earlier history and then opium during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. With the famous Huanguoshu and other tourist attractions, it is now a major tourist city of Guizhou. Anshun City is very well known for its batik work. Additionally, it is one of the industrial cities of the province.

This trip had two major programs. The first emphasized the Miao minorities and the impact of tourism on these minorities. The second program related to Anshun's people and tourist attractions. The minority program focused on two Miao villages near Anshun. The first village was strongly influenced by

tourism and was certified as a tourist village, with villagers trained to work with tourists and sell their goods and cultural entertainment. They had a marketplace designed specifically for tourists. The village appeared to be economically stable. The people were well fed and clothed. They welcomed the Fulbright-Hay Group with pleasant smiles and joyous songs. The second village was located in an area with agriculturally poor land. In the past, villagers were semi-nomadic, and moved to live near their farming site for most of the year and then returned to the village for a few months. In the last few years, the Guizhou Government has made special efforts to develop this village. They built a road to the village, permanent homes for many villagers, and a forestation site and nursery near the village. Despite these efforts, the village was the poorest the group visited during the one-month trip to China. Many people continue to live in old mud houses with hay roofs. The people of the village appeared to be very poor economically, socially, educationally, and spiritually. They seemed to suffer from mal-nutrition and dress in torn clothes. People of this village spoke a Western branch of the Miao language and understood some of the words Hmong Americans used to speak with them. Many members of the visiting group were saddened when they saw these villagers and learned of their poverty. The group, without hesitation, collected more than one hundred dollars to donate to the villagers.

In the second village, the group learned about poverty and the difficulty of rebuilding the economy of rural Miao villages. The visit to this village was not part of the official program, but the President of the Anshun Political Consultative Council and the leader of the County it was located in took the group to the village. One of the positive things during the visit to the Anshun Miao was that the President of Anshun Political Consultative Council was a Miao and the third most influential leader in the area. He welcomed the party and took the group to visit the two villages above. He explained the social conditions of the Miao of these two villages and took the group through many Miao cultural activities. In the first village, he led the villagers to perform a welcoming ceremony, coordinated the cultural performances, and presided over the lunch. He appeared to be a hands-on leader who instilled hope in his people. The villagers welcomed the group with their welcoming ceremony, similar to the one the group experienced in Yunnan, but much more elaborate and stylistic, indicating their artistic and musical skills and sophistication. During lunch, the guests went through a ritualistic toast and ceremonial drinking and feasting. In addition to the toast made by hosts and guests, the women sang welcoming songs and then offered drinks to their guests. Although there was no forced-drinking, the hosts expressed their desire for their guests to drink to the last drop and eat to the last grain of rice, which would indicate that the guests had had enough. On the way out of the village, residents gathered at the gate to send the group off with a gift of eggs dyed in red, representing good luck and good

will. The farewell ceremony was as important as the welcoming ceremony. Guests were led out by the Qeej (Lusheng) players, and passed by villagers who were waiting to give eggs to their guests. They sang songs and placed eggs on the necks of their guests. They waived as the bus departed. It was very touching and emotional, especially for those visitors who were Hmong descendants. It was like a dream, seeing one's own ancestors for just a brief time.

The second field trip covered part of the Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Prefecture, situated in the Southeast of Guizhou. Among the several people who accompanied the group to Qiandongnan was Li Tianyi, a twenty-eight year old anthropology student. He was from Qiandongnan and a native of the Shi Jiang Village. His grandmother still lived in the family house in Shi Jiang, where they continued to own their field and other properties. With a population of over ten thousand, Shi Jiang is the largest Miao village in Qiandongnan, and one of many Miao villages in the county of Leishan. Li Tianyi grew up in Leishan County where his father, Li Jinping, was an official. Li Jinping had been a professor at the University for Ethnic Minorities for several years.

The group spent two nights at the Hua Du Hotel in Leishan Town, the Capital of Leishan County. While staying in this community, the group visited Si Jiang, the famous Leigong Mountain, Langde Miao village, and a Qeej (Lusheng) manufacturer. On the third day, the group passed through many cities, including Taijiang and Shidong. Below is a brief description of some of these sites and towns.

Leigong Mountain: With a peak over seven thousand feet, Leigong Mountain is the highest mountain in the Southeast Guizhou area (Qiandongnan). It is a Chinese National Nature Reserve and has the reputation of having overlapping mountain ridges, as well as a diversity of plants and animals. Leigong Mountain is also well known for being a historical site of war and rebellion. Ancient Chinese and the people in the area believe that Leigong Mountain is the home of the God of Thunder because during the summer thunderstorms are frequently heard from this mountain. From the top of the highest peak one can see the many overlapping ridges of the mountains and its lush forest. The climate of this mountain is unpredictable as it can be sunny in the morning and rainy in the afternoon or vice versa. It can also be foggy and cloudy. On the positive side, it is cool and comfortable in the summer, making it an ideal place to visit.

Many young Chinese today know that Leigong Mountain is a National Nature Reserve and one of the tallest mountains in the Guizhou Province, but the mountain has a historical significance as well that attracts tourists. Many rebels in history, such as the Chinese Communists, used this mountain as their revolutionary base or hiding place. Zhang Shiumei, the legendary Miao general, who led a rebellion against the Qing

Emperor in the middle of the nineteenth century, was captured on the west side of the Leigong Mountain. Li Tianyi explained to this author that Leigong Mountain is also home to a variety of trees, lush vegetation, and wild animals. He said the mountain provided Zhang Shiumei and his army needed shelter, foods, and weapons. As a result, Zhang Shiumei and his army stood against the Qing Emperors for eighteen years. At the end, Zhang Shiumei was captured on the Leigong Mountain, sent to Changsha and executed. Li Tianyi said the Army of Qing Emperor not only executed Zhang Shiumei, but brought Zhang Xiumei's head from Changsha to warn the Miao people residing in the Leigong Mountain area. He continued to explain that eight Miao villages in the area were completely destroyed and thousands of Miao people were executed and imprisoned shortly after the Qing Army captured Zhang Shiumei.

The road to Leigong Mountain is well built and maintained. One of the many reasons for having such a good road is for military purposes. The Chinese Government knows that Leigong Mountain has been the hiding ground for many rebels in the past. The Chinese Government, therefore, needs good roads to the mountain, so their troops can get there in a timely fashion, if any future opponents of the government were to use the mountain as a hidden shelter.

Lande Village: Lande Village is famous for having its own very unique architectural style and designs. Because of its uniqueness, the Chinese Architectural Society declared this village a preserved cultural heritage site. Having been declared a cultural heritage site, the villagers have been required to abide by many rules, including those inhibiting new additions or infrastructures, unless approved by the Chinese Architectural Society. The second reason this village is famous is its history. During the Qing Dynasty, a leader of this village rebelled against the Qing Emperor. Although he lost the war, his name and village became a historical site.

Taijiang: Taijiang is the hometown of the famous rebel Zhang Shiumei, who reportedly led a rebellion against the Qing Emperor from 1854 to 1873. The Miao make up approximately ninety percent of the population of Taijiang. During the lectures on Miao history, Professor Li Jinping stated that Zhang Shiumei was the paramount leader of the rebellion against the Qing Dynasty during the middle of the nineteenth century, from 1854 to 1873. He stated that Zhang and his troops stood against the Qing for eighteen years, until Zhang was captured on the Leigong Mountain and taken to Changsha to be tortured and executed. This account appears to be supported by many Miao in Guizhou and scholars in China. During the two-week stay in Guiyang, this author met with many important people, including a group of leaders from Taijiang, who proudly introduced themselves as the leaders of Taijiang, hometown of Zhang Shiumei. Many

other scholars and leaders the author met in Guizhou also referred to Zhang Shiumei as the leader of the rebellion of the middle of the nineteenth century. Some historians, however, question the account of Zhang Shiumei being the supreme leader of the mentioned rebellion. Jenks (1994), for example, suggests that the portrayal of Zhang Shiumei as the supreme leader of the "Miao Rebellion," is political in nature, supporting the People's Republic of China by making Zhang Shiumei a hero of Miao's struggle against the oppression of the Qing Dynasty. Jenks also states that the naming of Zhang Shiumei as the supreme leader of the rebellion plays down the roles of other leaders, such as Gao He, who was referred to in historical documents as one of the two "great kings." The other great king was Jiu Song – one of the leaders of the rebellion.

According to Jenks, Gao He, who was captured in 1872 near Leigong Mountain, was the last leader to be captured. He lists the Miao leaders of the rebellion as Zhang Shiumei, Gao He, Bao Dadu, Jin Gan'gan, Jin Dawu, and Jiu Dabai. Jenks sums up his description of the Miao leaders of the rebellion writing "All but the last, who was killed in action in April 1872, were captured and executed by the government" (1994:159). Although many leaders of the rebellion were Miao, Jenks argues that the label "Miao" rebellion against Han rulers is not a proper depiction of the Miao. He states that the Han rulers created the label to use the Miao as a scapegoat. The rebellion, he writes, included many factions, with leaders and supporters from many ethnic groups, including the Miao and the Han.

Shidong: After having lunch in Taijing and a brief tour of the Zhang Shiumei statue, the group left the town heading to Shidong and then to Kaili. On the way to Shidong, the group passed through the rough landscape of Guizhou and went up and down along the hills and valleys of this part of Guizhou, seeing the villages of many ethnic minorities and their terrace paddy fields. Despite the inhospitable terrains and climates, many parts of the landscape were beautiful and breathtaking. In the afternoon, the group reached the town of Shidong, which was located on the banks of the Wuyang River. This town is famous for making Miao silver ornaments. The group stopped and bought many Miao silver ornaments and toured their factories. Unlike in other mountain towns, many families in this town owned the boats they used for the boat festival. After visiting Shidong, the group took a road that was under construction to Kaili. Because of the condition of the road, it took many hours for the group to reach Kaili, the Capital of Qiangdongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture.

Kaili: In Kaili, the group checked into the Guo Tai Hotel in the busy center of Kaili. The general area of the town near the hotel appeared to possess many signs of economic prosperity. There were numerous construction projects and large numbers of shops and local shoppers. Moreover, people appeared to be well clothed and fed. This observation reminded the author about the allegation that some people in Kaili committed cannibalism during the rebellion of 1854 and 1873 because of war and starvation.

Kaili, the Capital of Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Prefecture, has a population of about half a million, with Miao and Dong representing sixty to seventy percent of that population. Li Tianyi, a young Miao scholar, who accompanied the group to Kaili, said the Miao represent about one half of the Kaili population. In fact, Kaili likely has the largest urban concentration of a Miao population in the world, followed by Guiyang and the Twin Cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis. A Miao scholar told this author that there are about 200 thousand Miao or descendants of Miao living in Guiyang, which is more than the estimated sixty thousand Hmong in the Twin-Cities of St Paul and Minneapolis in the U.S. Wang Zhengfu, the Executive Vice-Governor of the Guizhou Province, is a Miao and native of Kaili. He was the Mayor of Kaili from 1992 to 1996.

During the "Miao" rebellion (1854-1873), Kaili was temporarily captured by the Miao, which might be one of the explanations for the large Miao population in this city. The diverse population of this city tests the modern Chinese minority and majority relationship, which seems to be better than in the pre-1949 period, but prejudice and discrimination still exist. Many signs in this region were written in three languages, Han, Miao, and Dong. During the trip, members of the group met with Miao women who had come to town selling their needle work. Members of the group visited the homes of these women and learned about how they live and work in Kaili. Some of the women came to Kaili from other cities to do business. Conversations with hotel staff revealed that one of the receptionists was a Miao as well. A masterpiece sculpture hanging on the wall of the hotel lobby displayed a scene of a Miao New Year festival. The gift shop of the hotel had several completed suits of the Miao costumes on display. The hotel was nearby a four-way roundabout, which had a Miao Qeej (Lusheng) at the center, surrounded by a round wall sculpted with scenes of Miao festivals and daily life. On the four corners of this wall stood four buffalo horns, another symbol of the Miao tracing back to ancient king Ci You, who used buffalo horns as a symbol of his kingdom. The silver ornaments of today's Miao in Qiandongnan include two silver buffalo horns. In many villages, the villagers welcome their guests with rice wine in buffalo horns.

The highlight of this trip was the visit to the Shi Jiang village in Leishan County. This was not only a large Miao village, but also quite beautiful. The village was situated on both sides of a small river. The festival and dancing center of the village was on the bank of the river, so people from both sides of the village were able to view the festival from the windows of their own living rooms. From the river, one was able to see the unique architectural wooden houses of the village, appearing as though one was on top of the other. At the festival or dancing center, a pole was erected in the middle, and the round platform was leveled and paved with cement. During the festival, young girls and boys gathered at this platform to dance dressed in their best costumes with full silver ornaments. Some of the costumes of the girls from wealthier families cost more than three thousand U.S. dollars, and many of their silver ornaments were family heirlooms passed down from many generations. Before leaving Guiyang to Qiandongnan, a Chinese professor in Guiyang who has studied the people of Shi Jiang told this author, "You will enjoy Shi Jiang. It is one of the most beautiful villages I have ever seen."

Because both sides of the river were steep and on hills, roads only passed the foothill or banks of the river. Villagers from both sides of the river easily noticed any stranger, car, or bus that stopped or passed through. If there were any signs of danger, villagers were prepared to defend themselves because they were on high ground and had a 'bird's eye' on their enemies. In the event of having to escape, many small trails from their villages to the hills and forest provided them an easy way out into the many surrounding mountains and thick forests. It appears that the forefathers of the village planned their village to be at a strategic location, to easily defend themselves in the event of war, harassment, or robbery. Scholars have noticed these types of Miao villages and towns designed, planned, and built with self-defense in mind. Such observations have been mentioned in some documents, including Jenks' (1994), *Insurgency and Social Disorder in Guizhou: the "Miao" Rebellion in Guizhou, 1854-1873*.

Residents of Shi Jiang village welcomed the group with their traditional hospitality. They first fired firecrackers to fight off evil spirits and then initiated the welcoming ceremony to welcome guests to the village. Villagers used Qeej (Lusheng) and another musical instrument made out of bamboo pipes to welcome the guests. Guests were led to one of the dancing grounds in the village, where they were entertained with welcoming music and songs, followed by more songs of hospitality and drinks. After that, performers changed costumes to perform dances and songs about their culture. Their performance highlighted village activities during the year, such as harvest time and crop planting. At the end of the performance, all guests were invited to join the dance. The group had an opportunity to visit the homes of several families, local

shops, and the village school. Several English teachers from the local school had never had the opportunity to talk to English speakers before, and were happy to carry on a conversation with members of the group. The group learned from these teachers that ninety-nine percent of the students at this school were Miao who came to school without the language skills of Chinese Mandarin, the language of instruction at the institution. In this situation, students must either swim or sink in learning Mandarin as well as other subjects in the Mandarin language. As they enter junior high school, they can select English as their foreign language. On one hand, it is a surprise to see English being taught in such a rural school and how powerful the English language is. On the other, it is difficult for students to learn Chinese Mandarin and English without having a strong foundation in their first language.

In addition to the official visits to Anshun and Qiandongnan, some members of the group also visited Gaopuo on their own. Gaopuo is about a two hour driving distance from Guiyang and the highest point of the Guiyang area. Those who visited Gaopuo passed through several Miao villages featuring rice terrace fields, but the most important sites visited were the Cave Burial Site, and the remains of a defense fortress surrounding a hill built by Miao to resist the suppression of the Qing Imperial Army. The Secretary of the Communist Party of Gaopuo County explained that the war was a result of the corrupt and misinformed government officials at the time. He said the Miao people of the area experienced natural hardship due to drought, and as a result, they faced starvation. The local government of the area had a large storage of rice, but refused to help the Miao. Some of the Miao in the area, after many unsuccessful attempts at requesting help, went to the government rice storage and forcibly took rice from the facility. To make the matters worse, the local government reported to a higher level claiming the Miao of Gaopuo wanted to establish their own kingdom. Upon hearing the report, the Qing Imperial Government sent troops to suppress the Miao mercilessly. Miao leaders and their young men retreated to the hills and built a defense fortress, a stonewall, as their last stand. Despite being cut off from their supplies, the Miao lived on these hills for many years before being captured. The stonewall fortress still stands upright today to testify to the courage and defiance of the poor Miao rebels toward the Qing Imperial Army. Stories of their courage continue to be told by the people of the area.

Shortly after visiting Gaopuo, the author was invited to a banquet hosted by a local Miao Studies group. After a brief discussion of the author's visit to Gaopuo, the author asked, "Why, wherever the Miao live, are there remnants of resistance and rebellion?" One of the senior scholars responded, "The Miao are a peace loving people and they only fought when they were oppressed or provoked." This response is similar

to the observation of Lewis and Lewis (1984:133) stating, "The Hmong are hospitable, always ready to welcome strangers and give them the best food they have. When it comes to competing for land, however, another side of their character can be revealed . . . . Hmong see themselves as being inferior to no other ethnic groups." Jenks (1994:35) writes:

> The Chinese in imperial times generally regarded the Miao as barbaric, lazy, violent, and cunning, but tended to be more indulgent and kindly disposed toward them if they adopted Chinese customs. In contrast, most missionaries and other foreigners – with some notable exceptions –found the Miao to be diligent, loyal, hospitable, self-reliant, and independent."

Lewis and Lewis (1984:133) concluded their writing about the Hmong in Thailand stating, "The independence they seek, however, is not for the individual, but for the kin group, and the liberty they cherish is group liberty." K. Yang (2003:297) writes, "a better way to know [why the Hmong move from mountain to mountain] is to ask the deer that has been chased why it changed its forest, and [a better way to know why the Hmong rebel is to] ask a dog that has been kicked why it fought back."

The Many Perspectives of Miao History

This author learned through lectures and discussion with scholars of the Miao that the history of the Miao is not yet fully developed. It is in the process of being pieced together. The interpretation of the history of the Miao has more than one view. One perspective, which is commonly mentioned in the classroom, is the claim that Miao today are descendants of King Ci You and his people, who lived in Central China about 4,700 years ago. Most Miao officials and scholars this author talked to believed that King Ci You was the ancestral king of the Miao people. They cited many historical and cultural pieces of evidence. Among the many cultural pieces cited was the wearing of silver ornaments of buffalo horns among the Hmu in Guizhou. According to historical paintings and legends, King Ci You wore two buffalo horns and used buffalo horns as a symbol of his kingdom. The belief that King Ci You was the ancestral king of the Miao is a popular idea in Guizhou and in recent years there has been a movement initiated by Wang Chaowen to build a Miao historical theme park in Qiandongnan to include the statue of King Ci You. Among those who question the historical version that King Ci You was the ancestral king of the Miao people is the scholar Wu Xiaodong of Beijing. He believes the Miao lived south of Ci You's kingdom and when Ci You was defeated, his troops and people moved to the Miao area and mixed with them. Dr. Shi Maoming of the Chinese Academy of Social Science politely explained that there are two views on the issue of King Ci You and the Miao. From the Miao's belief and their legend, they are descendants of Ci You. On the other hand, there is not sufficient historical evidence to positively support the claim at this time. Ci You was one of the three legendary kings

believed to have lived in Central China about five thousand years ago. The other two were Huang Di and Yen Di. According to legend, Huang Di and Yen Di conquered Ci You's kingdom and forced him to move south. The Han Chinese today believe that Huang Di was their ancestor (Sun & Shi, 2002). The Tomb of Huang Di or the Yellow Emperor is located about 200 kilometers north of Xi'an and is one of the most visited sites by the Han Chinese. It is also believed that Yen Di, whose Tomb is believed to be in Shanxi Province, was an ancestor of the Han Chinese as well. Very limited creditable scholarly literature exists about Ci You and his descendants. Although many Miao believe that Ci You was buried in a tomb in Hebei Province, the certainty of this has not yet been established.

The Causes of Many Past Rebellions

Many rebellions and uprisings in Chinese history are the result of ethnic distrust, hostility, and oppression. Jenks (1994) lists ethnic hostility and alienation of lands as two of the basic categories contributing to the uprising in the middle of the nineteenth century, which was labeled as the "Miao" rebellion. He observes that negative attitudes toward the Miao minority in China still exist today. Professor Wang Qinghua, who lectured to the Fulbright-Hay Group on the history of Yunnan and its people, used his own personal experience to explain to the group the ignorance and bigotry of the majority toward the minorities in China. He stated that when he was a child he knew nothing about the minorities, except that their outlook, clothes, and culture were very different from those of the Han, the majority. Because of what he considers the ignorance at the time, he believed that the minorities were inferior to the Han, and he justified his belief by observing the minorities' lack of a written language and documented history. He explained that his negative perception about the minorities only changed after he graduated from university and began his fieldwork. He added that his fieldwork and personal contact with the minorities are what enabled and empowered him to find the minorities to be inferior to no one. He continued to explain that his studies of and contact with the minorities had opened his eyes and broadened his perspective. Professor Wang's testimony is similar to the writing of Kitano and Daniels (1995:1) who write, "The less we know, the more we rely on myths, symbols, and stereotypes. Conversely, the more we know, the less we rely on such images."

Professor Li Jinping lectured on Miao history and explained that the Miao rebelled against the Ming and Qing governments at the rate of at least once every decade, but no rebellions are known to have taken place since the Communists took over China in 1949. This author asked Professor Li why there are no Miao rebellions against the Government of the People's Republic of China. Professor Li's explanation was simple and short. The Communists included the Miao into their government, addressed their needs and issues, and

promoted equality and equity among all ethnic groups. Although things were not perfect under the Communists, the socio-economic and political situations of the Miao appeared to be better in many ways. With the Communist party in power, Qiandongnan, for example, was proclaimed Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture. Minorities were also given some decision making power. Moreover, for the first time in Guizhou history, a Miao reached the rank of Provincial Governor in 1997. Wang Chaowen, who was born in Huangping County, Qiangdongnan Prefecture, served one term as Governor of Guizhou and so far has the reputation of being one of the most effective Governors of the province. Guizhou continues to include many minorities in its current government. Wang Zhengfu, the current Executive Vice-Governor of Guizhou Province, for example, is Miao of the Hmu group, and a native of Kaili.

Minority Policy Under the Red Flag of the People's Republic of China

During the many lectures on Chinese history and the experience of the minorities in China, this author gathered that the minorities and peasants in Guizhou supported the Chinese Communist movement in the early twentieth century because of their poverty, the Long March, and the Communists' stated policies of equality for all the people of China. During the Long March, which took place in the 1930s, Mao Zedong and his red army passed through many Miao villages in Guizhou and found the Miao to be very poor, but friendly. Mao Zedong instructed his troops to be culturally sensitive to the minority people and the peasants. As a result of their poverty and Mao's respect and sympathy toward them, many Miao villagers and leaders began to support the Communist movement. When the Communists took power in 1949, they brought many minorities and peasants into the government of the People's Republic and declared many regions, prefectures, and counties as minority autonomous regions. The Miao and other minorities enjoyed a short period of protection and inclusion from the Chinese Communist Party and government. The Cultural Revolution, which was started in 1966 by Mao Zedong to eliminate his political rivals, negatively impacted the Chinese minority policy and associated minority cultural protections. The Cultural Revolution promoted the destruction of the "Four Olds," including cultural practices, religious places and symbols, and anything that was considered a remnant of the past system. Minority religion, festivals and traditions were forbidden.

The visit of US President Richard Nixon to China in 1972, and the arrest of the so-called Gang of Four in 1976 marked the beginning of China's open door policy. After the opening of China to the west, many Chinese Government officials, scholars, and students were sent to the west to study and go on educational tours of other countries. Many of these officials brought their knowledge about foreign laws and policies about protecting the rights of minorities and promoting tolerance to China. These visits and the

greater opening occurring within China resulted in more hospitable minority policies and programs in the 1980s. These policies included the partial exemption of minorities living in rural areas from the one child policy (minorities in rural areas may have up to 3 children) and the special incentives given to minority students to apply for university. The Chinese market economy and economic prosperity began to reach the southwest areas in the last 15 years, allowing all people, the minority and majority to compete in the open market. Equal competition does not, however, mean equal opportunity to get power, resources, credit, and information. Consequently. a few have become richer, but the majority of them are poorer and far behind in socioeconomic status compared to the Han Chinese people.

Majority-Minority Relations

Notes from lectures, observations, and discussions with Chinese scholars appear to support the conclusion that China is now moving toward the majority-minority relations of a "Fluid Competitive Relationship," which is defined by Farley (1995) as relations that exist in a society in which discrimination has been outlawed, and both the minority and majority groups are free to pursue any endeavor. The United States of America has been known to have been in this category since the end of World War II. Farley (1995) suggests that factors contributing to this type of change are the effects of urbanization and industrialization, rising educational levels, and the easing of inter-group competition. Although China appears to be moving toward improved minority-majority relations, its existing affirmative action program appears to be weak and its legal systems have not yet been fully developed to protect the minorities and promote their socio-economic, educational, and political status.

The Impact of the Chinese Market Economy

Lacking cultural capital, education, technology, know-how, connections, credit, and resources, the Miao and other minorities cannot compete with the Han, especially those who live in the cities. The minorities are once again left to fend for themselves. While the Han majority and city people enjoy the fast growing Chinese economy, the minorities have not benefited to the same degree. The Miao minority's focus on cultural tourism within the last ten years has had positive and negative outcomes. It has provided capital, but it has also negatively impacted Miao communities in certain ways. In many of these villages, religious or cultural festivals that were traditionally performed only once a year are now performed for tourists whenever they visit their villages, turning their sacred religious and cultural ceremonies into nothing more than a form of tourist entertainment. Moreover, tourists also have brought diseases, pollution, and other things that have harmed minority villages, in addition to the dollars they pay for cultural entertainment. Those who benefit the

most from the booming Chinese ethnic/cultural tourist industry are not the peasants and the minorities, but the people living in the cities and working in the government. Travel agencies, hotel industries, transportation providers, restaurants, and employees of these industries stand to benefit the most. The government also benefits from taxes and fees generated from the tourist industries.

Although migration from rural areas to the many large cities in Guizhou has recently been on the rise, the majority of the Miao people in the province continue to live in rural and mountainous areas. Many rural villages continue to be untouched by modernization and tourists, while some minority villages have been strongly impacted by ethnic tourism (Wu, 2000). Corrigan (2002: 14, 16) writes "The Valley floors are the richest areas while the hillside soil is shallow and rocky, making farming difficult" and families living in the mountains often cannot grow enough food to support themselves. Consequently, those who live on the hills tend to be poorer than those who live on the valley floors. Guizhou has been known as one of the poorest provinces in China. Although the Miao are one of the poorest ethnic groups in Guizhou, a few have stood to benefit from the Chinese market economy, which has just recently reached the province's many major cities. This author met with several of these young entrepreneurs. One of them is reputed to own many skyscrapers and other businesses in Guiyang, the Capital of Guizhou. His businesses include a construction and real estate company, an advertisement agency, and several other enterprises. Many of the new rich of Guiyang are involved with the very competitive real estate businesses.

Reflections of the Hmong Participants of the Fulbright Group Project to China

Senda Chang, a Hmong American student of teacher education born in the United States, was very surprised about what she learned related to Hmong history on the tour. She said her father told her that the Hmong came from Mongolia, but she learned from many Professors in China that the Hmong ancestral home is in Central China and that the Hmong have a very long history there. She explained "it was very emotional for me because that's [China] where my ancestors came from. My parents never had an opportunity to see China" (Turner, 2004). Reflecting on the trip, she wrote "*I have learned more about the origin of the Hmong people, their struggles and strengths, and their relationship with the mainstream culture. I have learned that minorities everywhere share common denominators. I can compare it with the relationships that exist here in the United States. Because of this trip, I plan to complete a Master's degree and/or Dissertation on minority-majority relations with an emphasis on the Hmong people.*"

Other Hmong members of the group raised questions about the language differences between the Hmong in Southeast Asia and the Miao in China. Many of them questioned the notion that all of the groups

belong to the so-called Miao nationality who are believed to share a common culture and history. Their questions stemmed from the differences of languages and costumes. Some of them were disappointed that the trip was so short, not having given them enough time to visit villages and interact with the Miao in China. Most Hmong members of the group seemed to be very excited about meeting the Miao in China and seeing historical sites and statues of historical heroes of the Miao. Doua and Song Vu, and Sao Vue were members of the group who are Laos-born Hmong Americans. Song wrote, "I have learned many things in China, particularly about the Hmong people. I've always known that we are one intelligent group of people, but after seeing the historical war site and learning about the situations that the Hmong people went through, I couldn't be more amazed. In addition, seeing the way people lived their lives in China makes me realize about the kinds of things that we take for granted." Doua Vu wrote in her family's *The Annual S&D Family Chronicle* (2004:2), "It was a fantastic experience." The highlights of her experience were learning about the majority-minority relations, visiting various historic landmarks, Miao villages, and the sharing of traditional Hmong songs from Laos with her Miao cousins in China.

When asked his overall feeling about the trip, Sao Vue said *"I am so grateful for all the wonderful hospitalities we received while in China. Our hosts were awesome. The tours, the foods, the performances, the presentations, and receptions were all fantastic. I strongly believe that everything we have learned from those well-planned presentations and first hand field work experience are priceless for our continuing global relationship with China. Some Hmong in Guizhou are very successful entrepreneurs, educators, professors, governors, mayors, senators, and so on. However, the majority of the Hmong in China still need a lot of help and financial support to keep their feet on the ground. I also feel that in the next five years, China's economic development will be equivalent or near the U.S."*

Sia Her, another participant in the Project and an American born Hmong, reflected on her meeting with Miao in China writing, *"I think one of the most important things is learning about my own cultural heritage in China. There are so many Hmong languages, traditions, and beliefs. It was rewarding to see the similarities and differences between the Hmong in the U.S. and the Hmong in China*." When asked about her plan to share her knowledge with others, she replied" *I have talked about my experience to my mother and father, my nine younger brothers and sisters, and two friends. They all have said that I have changed significantly in many ways.* "

Many Hmong participants in the Fulbright-Hay Project plan to return to China either as tourists or scholars. Most of them have established networks in China and would like to develop projects to contribute to the development of the Miao people in Yunnan and Guizhou. Senda Chang's comment below appears to summarize the participants' feelings about their desires to return to China. She said, "I have established

relationships with some of the people in China that have assisted us in our study tour and I hope to work on collaborative projects that will improve the minority status and well-being." It appears that the Hmong Americans participating in this program not only learned from those in China, but saw future opportunities for more projects and networking. These American trained young Hmong will further explore their people's history and other aspects of the Miao experience in China. Moreover, they will document and tell from their perspective as descendants of Miao ancestry. They will find other missing pieces of the historical Hmong experience.

Conclusion

These pages outline informal notes related to visits by Hmong-Americans to Miao communities and their quest for knowledge from China, the land of their ancestors. This paper is by no means intended to fully reflect on the long history of the Miao and their diasporic experience, spreading to four of the world's five continents. Africa is the only continent that has no Hmong. These few pages, however, can pave the way for future research and contact between Hmong Americans and their Miao cousins. These informal notes are stepping stones for more in-depth studies of the Miao and their past and contemporary experience. The bridge has been built and academic dialogue has already begun; pieces of the Miao experience have been collected, but much more research and additional scholarly exchanges are needed.

The author would like to express that China has undergone major development since his first visit in 1986-87. China is more open today than in 1986. Past oppression and suppression did destroy the lives of many Miao and pushed them into the highlands and trapped them into poverty. But, oppression and suppression did not eliminate this ancient ethnic group. The opening of China, the Chinese market economy, technology, and the growth of ethnic tourism might play important roles in the process of assimilating the Miao into the Han culture and global culture. In the past, it has been said, "The Emperor has ten thousand soldiers, but the Hmong have ten thousand mountains" (Yang, 2003: 298). Today, there are no ten thousand mountains for the Miao to hide in and retain their culture. The global economy and globalization will affect the Miao more than ever. Almost every adult Chinese, who lives in the city has a mobile telephone, and almost every high school student in China speaks some English and knows something about computers, McDonald's and the Internet. No teenager wants to dress in traditional clothes, and modern clothes are now widely accessible and available. Moreover, it is too expensive and time consuming to make traditional clothes. The business principle of demand and supply will eventually conquer the traditions and traditional culture of the Miao in China as well as the Hmong in the United States.

On the other hand, the forces of education, technology and the market economy that push young people away from their traditional life can also be used to empower them in preserving aspects of their culture and traditional way of life. If Miao children can get a good education, high paying jobs, and receive a more equal share of the prosperity of China, they may be empowered to work to save their ethnicity and culture on the one hand, and on the other, be active participants in the social, economic and political developments of China. When all of the peoples of China enjoy an equal share of the economic and political power and enjoy the same protection under the laws, rebellions and mistrust will become things of the past. The Chinese Communists have, to certain degree, started the process, but more needs to be done. When the various peoples of China are equal in power, the government and the people will benefit. This state of glory, however, requires leadership, commitment, and effort from the government and all of the ethnic groups of China. As Confucius said, "a journey of thousand miles begins with a single step."

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[i] The name, Miao, is used in this paper to refer to all subgroups under the name "Miao" in China. When referring to the Hmong in the West, the term Hmong is used as the Hmong in the West and in Southeast Asia belong to the Hmong subgroup of the Miao. When refer to those in China, the term "Miao" is used to include all groups under the lumping term, Miao. This term is also used to reflect the current social reality in China and the use of this lumping term by the Government of the People's Republic of China. Generally, the Miao in China have four major groups: Goshiong/Guoxiong, Hmu, Ah Hmao, and Hmong. Because the Hmong are only one of the four major groups, it is not accurate to use the term, "Hmong" to refer to all of the four subgroups under Miao.

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Photographs from the 2004 Fulbright-Hay Group Project to China

Hmong-Americans Song Vu (l), Sia Her (center) and Senda Chang-Thao (right) chat with two Hmong women in Yunnan in the western Miao language. Despite a minor difference in accent, both sides could easily understand each other. Both Sia Her and Senda were born in the United States.

Group Photo: Officials of the Guizhou University for Ethnic Minorities/ International Cultural Exchange Center and members of the Fulbright-Hay Group Project.

Hmong/Miao villagers in the Anshun area welcome members of the Fulbright-Hay Group to their village

Lisa Yang, a Hmong-American girl, visits the Stone Fortress built by Hmong/Miao in the Gaopuo area to defend themselves against the suppression of the Qing army.

Cave Burial site of Hmong/Miao in the Gaopuo area.

Members of the Fulbright-Hay Group visit a very poor Hmong village near Anshun. Members of this village speak the western Miao language.

A sculpture portraying scenes of Hmong/Miao and Dong cultural activities in Kaili

A statue of Zhang Shiumei, believing to be the paramount leader of the "Miao" rebellion from 1854 to 1873.

A meeting between the author (center-left) with a group of officials of Taijiang city, and an entrepreneur from Guiyang