

The Migration and Integration of Miao Nationality in Hanzhong Area Recorded in Local Chronicles of Qing Dynasty

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Abstract: Hanzhong area of Shaanxi Province has superior geographical conditions. Many nationalities have lived there since ancient times. Based on the interpretation of Miao people's history and culture in local chronicles of Hanzhong in Qing Dynasty, this paper holds that in Qing Dynasty, Miao people mainly distributed in Zhenba, Xixiang and Foping of Hanzhong area; they were Huamiao (a branch of Miao nationality) migrated from Guizhou. The Miao people lived with local Han people harmoniously, and still retained their own language, clothing, religious belief, marriage and other cultural customs. Later, under the influence of natural and human factors, Miao nationality in Xixiang and Foping gradually merged with the local Han people. However, Miao people in Zhenba County still retained their own characteristics, and thus developed into the largest Miao community in Northwest China. It reveals that the change of geographical environment has dual impacts on the migration and integration of a nation.

1. Introduction

Miao nationality is an ancient ethnic group with a long history in the south of China. It is mainly distributed in Guizhou, Hunan, Hubei, Sichuan, Chongqing, Yunnan and other provinces. According to historical documents and word-of-mouth information, Miao people firstly lived in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River. Their ancestor was Chiyou. In the “three Miao” era, they developed to all directions, reaching the lower reaches of the Yellow River and the coast of the East China Sea. The Miao people once had wars with the Yanhuang tribe, and were defeated. Afterwards they moved to the Jiangnan Plain. Later, they gradually moved to the west and south, and finally reached the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau at present and mountain areas in the southwest. Since Ming and Qing Dynasties, most of the Miao people lived in Southwest China. [1] Through investigation, the author finds that there are Miao people distributed in Hanzhong area of Shaanxi Province, which is located in the inland of Northwest China. The information is rarely mentioned in ethnic studies. These Miao people had moved to Hanzhong area in Qing Dynasty. Their migration, distribution and customs are recorded in local chronicles of Hanzhong area of Qing Dynasty. This paper discusses specific details as below.

2. The Origin, Distribution and Migration of Miao Nationality in Hanzhong

According to *Local Chronicles of Xixiang County: Residents* in Qing Dynasty, “there are ten families of Miao people. Local people said they fled here due to the movement of bureaucratization of native officers during the reign of Yongzheng Emperor. Today, ... there are two surnames in Zuoxixia, Wu and Li.” [2]

According to *Chronicles of Dingyuan Ting: Geography: Miao Custom* (Dingyuan is the Zhenba County now) in Qing Dynasty, “in the fiftieth year of Qianlong's reign, Miao people with six surnames of Xiong, Tao, Li, Wu, Yang and Ma came here from Zunyi Prefecture of Guizhou. They settled in Huangcun which was under the control of the Ting government”. [3] (Ting is one of the most basic administrative units of Qing Dynasty.)

According to *Chronicles of Foping Ting* in Qing Dynasty, “in Dongshawo governed by Foping, there are Miao people with six surnames of Li, Wu, Xiong, Ma, Wang and Chen, each of which has

two or three families to seven or eight families. They moved from Zunyi Prefecture of Guizhou Province in the 23rd year of Daoguang”. [4]

It can be seen from above chronicles that Miao people in Guizhou began to move to Hanzhong area in the first years of the reign of Yongzheng emperor; then they continued the migration during the reign of Qianlong and Daoguang emperors. They were distributed in Xixiang, Zhenba and Foping counties. As for the reasons of migration, there were no more than three categories: escape, famine and disease. Miao people in Xixiang County belonged to the first category. In the early years of Yongzheng's reign, the Miao people rebelled and moved to other places after the Qing government suppressed them and carried out the bureaucratization of native officers by force. The Miao people in Zhenba County and Foping county were likely to belong to the second category; they came here to escape from famine.

The native place of these Miao people is Guizhou. The migration route should start from Zunyi to Chongqing, then to Sichuan Basin and finally to Wanyuan. After that, they can reach Zhenba, Xixiang and Foping County of Hanzhong after climbing over the Daba Mountain. Along this route, the mountains are continuous; the forest is lush with deep grass, which is the most suitable environment for migration and living at that time. Why the Miao people did not stay in Sichuan Basin is not recorded in local chronicles. It may be related to the difficulty of acquiring lands in Sichuan.

3. The Ethnic Group, Relationship and Culture of Miao Nationality in Hanzhong Area

According to *Local Chronicles of Xixiang County: Residents* in Qing Dynasty, “there are ten households of Miao people... Their language sounds like chirps; they live in low and narrow places. Men wear Zhui and women wear their hair in a bun. Their skirts are cylindrical, with flowery cloth draped on the chest. They don't wear shoes, and can walk on the mountain as flat as walk on the ground. After giving birth, they bathe the baby in the stream. Afterwards, they smear oil on heels until the stab cannot penetrate. They believe in witchcraft, and have the custom of slaughtering cows and drinking win together. They often fight with weapons. In winter, they go hunting, get musk and exchange it for wine. If they kill wild animals, they directly roast them on fire and eat the meat.” [2]

According to *Chronicles of Dingyuan Ting: Geography: Miao Custom* of Qing Dynasty, “men do not wear crowns; women do not have hairpins. They wear skirts instead of clothes; they weave linen, and dye the linen as blue to make clothes. Women's clothes have seven colors, so they call themselves Huamiao (the flower Miao). Their voice sounds like chirps, which is difficult to distinguish. They call food as Lao, morning as Cha, noon as Fu, and night as Mao. They call wine as Jiu, and meat as Ai. The male is called as Dong; the female is called as Chai; the wife is called as Miao, and the words are called as Mi. They can also learn the local language. They do not worship God of Ao, or other fairies. They put chicken feet, grain of cloth, bamboo poles and leaves in front of the gate as consecration. The sacrifice ceremony needs dogs; in funerals they slaughter cows and gather in their dens to eat. People from six surnames marry each other. The wedding does not need horses; the bride walks with an umbrella. They often weave hemp to store grains... Their character is extremely straight and simple. Men and women work hard to earn their own living. They never spread rumors, slander or scold others, or fight against each other for trivial things. They are qualified with the identity of Emperor Xi's descendents. Why Miao people in Yunnan and Guizhou and Miao are so barbarous, but in here they are civilized? Maybe it is related with geographical conditions. Like the orange grown in the south of the Yangtze River is not suitable to grow in the north of the river. We hope Miao people in our county can keep their morality and always be good citizens; the barbaric Miao people in their native place should feel ashamed.” [3]

According to above chronicles, except for Miao people in Zhenba County who call themselves as Huamiao, the origins of Miao people from other two counties are not clear. However, they moved out from similar places and have similar national and cultural customs, so they should all belong to Huamiao, which is one branch of Miao nationality in Guizhou.

Through the investigation, compilers also recorded the pronunciation of local Miao language,

and clearly recorded that Miao people who moved in were learning the local Chinese. In particular, it is worth noting that Miao people in Dingyuan could support themselves and never compete with the Han people, which was highly praised. In addition, *Local Chronicles of Foping Ting: Residents of Qing Dynasty* also states that, “their character is extremely straight and simple. Men and women earn their own living. They never fight against each other.” [5] It shows that after moving into the Hanzhong area, the Miao nationality had harmonious relations with local ethnic groups. They can get along well with local people without any unpleasant ethnic disputes. As a result, local Han people accepted the immigrated Miao people, and gradually accepted the foreign ethnic group. In addition, by comparing them with fierce Miao people in Yunnan and Guizhou, it is pointed out that the Miao people in Hanzhong area became obedient residents. “Their character is extremely straight and simple. Men and women work hard to earn their own living. They never spread rumors, slander or scold others, or fight against each other for trivial things.” [3] The reason may be related with the change of geographical environment. It affirms the influence of geographical factors on the change and integration of Miao nationality.

As a unique branch of Miao nationality, Huamiao has rich cultural connotation, which can be seen from above local chronicles. In order to facilitate readers' in-depth understanding of the national culture Huamiao, the paper makes a preliminary exploration.

3.1 Miao Language

Miao language belongs the Miao Yao language group of the Sino Tibetan language family. Each syllable has a tone to distinguish the syllables of homonym and vowel. According to the similarities and differences of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, as well as Miao people's self-identity, residence and living habits, Miao language can be roughly divided into three major dialects (Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou dialect, east Guizhou dialect and west Hunan dialect), seven sub dialects (Guiyang sub dialect, Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou sub dialect, Northeastern Yunnan sub dialect, Huishui sub dialect, Luobo sub dialect, Mashan sub dialect and Chong'anjiang sub dialect), and eighteen local languages (eastern local language, western local language, southern local language and northern local language). [6] Among them, the Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou dialect is represented by the Danan mountain (Dananshan) in Bijie County of Guizhou Province. According to *Chronicles of Dingyuan Ting*, “they call food as Lao, morning as Cha, noon as Fu, and night as Mao. They call wine as Jiu, and meat as Ai. The male is called as Dong; the female is called as Chai; the wife is called as Miao, and the words are called as Mi. They can also learn the local language.” [3] In the survey, editors of local chronicles used Chinese characters as phonetic symbols of Miao language. Some of these characters were close to the original pronunciation, because the initials, finals and tones of these words in Miao language are the same or similar to those in Chinese. Take the Miao language in Dananshan as an example, the pronunciation of “food” in Miao language is nau31, which is similar to “Lao”; the pronunciation of “night” in Miao language is mau44, which is similar to “Mao”. However, the phonetic features of some words, such as “female” and “meat” can not reflect the real pronunciation of Miao language. The Miao pronunciation of “female” is utshai, and the Miao pronunciation of “meat” is Nqai. There is no such initial constant in Chinese, so there is a great difference between the original pronunciation of Miao and the phonetic notation of Chinese characters.

The Miao dialect recorded in local chronicles of Qing Dynasty is very similar to the Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou dialect represented by Dananshan dialect. The first native dialect of the Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou dialect is widely used in Zunyi area; it has stop consonants and affricates with nose crown sound as initial consonants. According to records of Miao language in local chronicles, local Miao language in Hanzhong is probably the first native dialect of the Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou dialect.

3.2 Miao Costumes

Although local Miao people are all Huamiao, there are still differences. For example, for Miao people in Xixiang County, “men wear Zhui and women wear their hair in a bun. Their skirts are cylindrical, with flowery cloth draped on the chest.” [2] For Miao people in Dingyuan Ting, “men

do not wear crowns; women do not have hairpins. They wear skirts instead of clothes; they weave linen, and dye the linen as blue to make clothes. Women's clothes have seven colors.” [3] Although there are differences, it can be seen that local Miao people still retained the characteristics of traditional Miao people's clothing: no headdress or crown, weaving hemp as clothing, preferring wearing skirts; the clothes are mainly dyed as blue and mixed with seven colors. The costume did not change after they entered the Han inhabited areas.

3.3 Religious Belief of Miao People

In the history of Miao nationality, the main religious belief is the witch ghost religion, or the witch religion. According to its causes and contents, the religion can be divided into two categories: one is the nature, totem and ancestor worship, which belongs to primitive religious belief and worship; the other is the ghost worship and sacrifice, which may be related to the influence of Taoism and Buddhism of the Han nationality, as well as the social phenomenon of the artificial mystification of power. [7] According to records of local chronicles in Qing Dynasty, the religious beliefs of Miao people in that area belong to the second category, that is, the worship of ghosts and gods and sacrifice, because of the habit of “slaughtering cows”. Miao people always have the habit of “slaughtering cows to worship ancestors”, which is the biggest and most ceremonious sacrifice activity of Miao people. After the sacrifice, the cows are often divided into parts and be eaten, which is consistent with the statement, “they believe in witchcraft, and has the custom of slaughtering cows and drinking wine together” in the local chronicles of Qing Dynasty. [2]

3.4 Marriage of Miao People

For Miao people lived in the eastern dialect region today, in weddings, most brides walk to the groom's house with an umbrella, accompanied by their parents, brothers and relatives. Only the marriage inside the same clan and surname is permitted. According to local chronicles of Qing Dynasty, “people from six surnames marry each other. The wedding does not need horses; the bride walks with an umbrella.” [3] The other marriage principle of Miao nationality is that they do not marry people of foreign nationalities or from different branches. For example, according to *General Annals of Yunnan* in Qing Dynasty, Miao people “married to people from the same branch; they never marry people from other nationalities.” [8] Historically, there are three main reasons for this custom. First is the estrangement between ethnic groups; second is the requirement of national psychological identity; third is the national policies of successive rulers. The second one is the main reason. The so-called “marriage with people of six surnames” should be marriage inside the same branch of Miao nationality. The local Miao people with six surnames belong to the same branch. They came to Hanzhong from Zunyi, Guizhou Province. They were unfamiliar with the local environment and original residents. In addition to their unique national characteristics, the distinction between “my nationality” and “your nationality” was obvious. Therefore, they strengthened their sense of national identity, which was manifested in their marriage custom.

4. The Current Situation of Miao Nationality's Integration in Hanzhong

Today, Zhenba County has the largest number of Miao people in Hanzhong area. Miao people here still retain the traditional Miao culture and are not fully integrated into the Han nationality. There are 179 families of 769 Miao people, distributed in Qingshui Township, Dazu, Renhe and other places in the north of the county. It is the largest Miao settlement in Northwest China. [9] In contrast, Miao nationality in Xixiang County and Foping County has gradually decreased. According to the newly compiled *Xixiang County Chronicles* (1992 edition), “Miao people flowed into Zuoxixia of the county in the Yongzheng period of Qing Dynasty. Because of the long-term living with local customs and many other reasons, they concealed their Miao identity for many years. They did not declare as Miao people until the 1982 census. Until 1990, there were 25 Miao people in Xixiang County.” [10] From this record, the main reason for the decrease of Miao nationality in Xixiang County is related to the integration with local Han people. According to *Local Chronicles of Xixiang County: Residents* in Qing Dynasty, “there are two surnames in

Zuoxixia, one is Wu, the other is Li. The surnames have been changed. They change their hairstyle, and wear upper garments and pants instead of cylindrical skirts.” [2] It can be seen that Miao nationality in Xixiang County began to integrate with Han nationality during the reign of Emperor Guangxu after they moved in and lived together with Han people. In addition, influenced by the policy of national discrimination in the feudal era and the Republic of China, Miao people “concealed their identity for many years” and did not declare themselves as Miao until 1982. Because the Miao population in Hanzhong was too small, this integration continued to exist. By 1990, only 25 people declared their ethnic identity. There may be many people who have changed their surnames as mentioned in chronicles due to the deep integration. As time goes on, without relevant written chronicles, they were unable to recognize their identifies as Miao people. They chose to integrate with the Han nationality and become Han people.

Compared with Xixiang County, the Miao nationality in Foping County disappeared in 1955. According to the newly compiled *Foping County Chronicles*, “there were more than 100 Miao people, who gradually moved away and died. By 1955, the Miao woman Wu Xiao died. So far, there were no descendants of Miao people coming from Guizhou.” [11] Apart from the integration with Han nationality, the reason for the disappearance of local Miao nationality is more related to the natural environment of Foping county. Foping area has more mountains than fields; the basic agricultural conditions are poor. Most of the good lands were occupied by local Han nationality. The Miao people who moved in could only cultivate in mountains. In addition, the natural environment here was bad; natural disasters often occurred, which leads to a large number of deaths. The Miao people who survived also moved to surrounding areas because of living difficulties, and finally became part of the Han Nationality under the influence of Han culture.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, in Qing Dynasty, Miao people in Hanzhong were mainly distributed in Zhenba, Xixiang and Foping areas. They migrated from Zunyi of Guizhou Province during the reign of Emperor Yongzhou, Emperor Qianlong and Emperor Daoguang. They belong to the branch of Huamiao in Miao nationality. During their harmonious coexistence with the Han nationality, Miao people also demonstrated and spread their splendid national culture. With the deepening of communication with the Han nationality, the numbers of Miao people in Xixiang and Foping areas gradually decreased; most of them were Chinesized and integrated into the Han nationality. In contrast, the Chinesization of Miao people in Zhenba County was relatively slow. Since Qing Dynasty, Zhenba County has developed into the largest Miao settlement in Northwest China; the Miao culture connotation has remained intact. It can be seen that the development and integration of an ethnic group should be a slow and complex process. The change of geographical environment has dual impacts on the immigrant ethnic group. On one hand, with the change of surrounding environment, the ethnic group gradually discarded their nationality and be integrated by local ethnic groups; on the other hand, the immigrant ethnic group can also adapt to local environment and local conditions, and continue its cultural gene in the process of seeking common ground while reserving differences with local ethnic groups. The ethnic pattern of harmonious coexistence in Hanzhong region was formed under that situation.

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