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Author(s): Sarah Turner and Jean Michaud

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SARAH TURNER AND JEAN MICHAUD

Imaginative and Adaptive Economic Strategies for Hmong Livelihoods in Lào Cai Province, Northern Vietnam

Processes of globalization have spatially enlarged the movement and flow of goods and services, yet we must not regard these as overarching phenomena devoid of any local reactions. Instead, there are multiple interlocking, complex relationships occurring between the global and the local. This article aims to gain a greater understanding of these interlocking dynamics that shape and position a range of socially embedded commodity flows in upland northern Vietnam. The specific commodities we examine here are textiles produced by highlander Hmong women, sold not only locally in markets but also regionally throughout Vietnam, as well as globally in “ethnic handicraft” stores around the world. While analyzing the elaborate, multiscalar geographies involved in the production systems of these textiles, as well as the social relationships surrounding their flows, we will argue that social and political relations of production, distribution, and consumption are constantly, imaginatively, and vigorously being renegotiated among numerous agents, production settings, and consumption sites.

Over the past ten years, while investigating livelihood adaptation in Lào Cai Province, particularly among the Hmong, we have noticed that studies of highland minority nationalities in that region tend to take a set shape. Such studies emphasize how a minority group is incorporated within the

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borders of one political entity, and how they subsequently react in more or less successful ways to the forces of state directives and globalization. However, we argue that many highlanders actually see their situation quite differently. Most of these highlanders are members of transnational ethnicities for whom kinship links are more important than citizenship, and for whom their distinct identity core is as valid as the national standard identity, that is, modern Kinh (lowland Vietnamese). It is by combining locally embedded social, political, and economic forms with the imperatives of Vietnam's liberalization that the Hmong adapt their strategies and reinvent themselves on a daily basis. What is absorbed and what is discarded depends on the particular local blend of agents, cultures, history, and the opportunities that arise at any precise moment, not just on rational choice and economic benefit.

In other words, our contribution does not focus so much on the relationship between Vietnamese state/discourse/policies and the *các dân tộc thiểu số* [the minority nationalities]. Rather, it follows the minorities' endogenous strategies, the Vietnamese state being only one actor in a complex picture of adaptation, defiance, and resistance. We ask: How are highland minorities' customary exchange networks developed, expanded, and made profitable in the current context of an expanding market economy? How does this expansion open opportunities for them and influence their general behavior and livelihoods? Our fundamental question is: How are highland minorities in Lào Cai Province today, and in particular the Hmong, playing their identities, traditions, and situation of political subordination and geographical fragmentation to their advantage?

These questions permit us to analyze the complex array of social interactions, intertwined with local customs, cultures, and controls that influence and shape the economic exchanges occurring among highlanders involved in textile trade—especially Hmong women—and between them and other associated actors.¹ This extends our insights into the livelihoods of these women and their households via a historically grounded and actor-oriented vision.²

The Context

The Vietnam provinces with the largest populations of highland minorities are in the north of the country. In Lào Cai Province, where this study is situated (see Map 1), there were 395,000 highlanders registered at the 1999

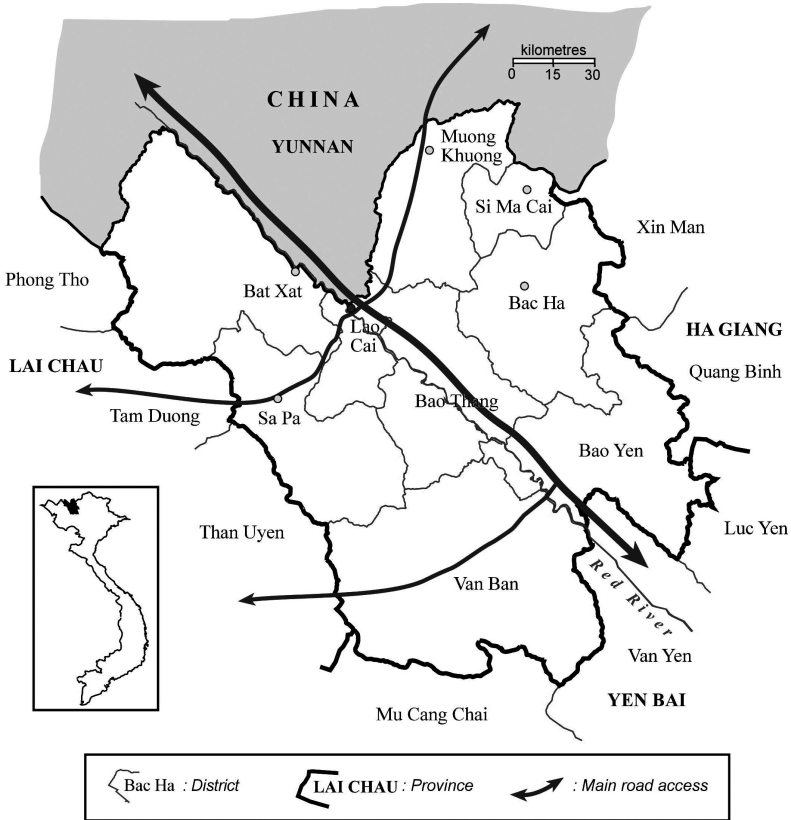
National Census, out of a total provincial population of 594,000, thus forming exactly two-thirds of the population.³ Lào Cai borders three other highland Vietnam provinces (Lai Châu, Yên Bái, and Hà Giang) and China's Yunnan Province. It is divided into two roughly equal halves by the Red River and the road and railway systems that follow the river's valley.

After reunification in 1975, the Vietnamese state was unswerving in its push to incorporate all highland societies into the Viet Nation, that is the communist state, as well as the national economy. This integration policy continues to today via the persistent expansion of infrastructure, national education in the Vietnamese language, and reorganization of the economy, all perceptible in Lào Cai Province. The minorities in that province, in spite of their comparative demographic weight, are by and large understood among lowland Vietnamese as "backward."⁴ This conception for the most part relates to the fact that in a country that places great value on remembering and celebrating the past, few minority cultures have indigenous archives, and most are thus classified as "peoples without history."⁵

This article focuses on the trade of textiles in Lào Cai Province and across the Chinese border. Such trade frequently takes place in marketplaces, where highland produce cultivated, gathered, or in the case of textiles, manufactured, by highland minorities is sold to or exchanged with other highland minorities, lowlanders (Kinh or Han Chinese), and, more recently, tourists, both domestic and foreign. For many highland groups, and especially the Hmong, marketplaces are used as much for social purposes as for economic ones.⁶ Clan exogamy requires young Hmong boys and girls to find partners outside their own patrilineal descent group, while hamlets are often monoclanic. Accordingly, marketplaces represent important sites for youth to find partners. For adults, the marketplace is a locale for exchanging information, meeting relatives living a distance away, and pausing from the hardships of cultivating a difficult terrain.⁷

The Hmong

The Hmong ethnic minority group, which we have also studied in Thailand and Laos, is the focus of this article.⁸ About five centuries ago the Han Chinese started moving into the mountain ranges of China's southwest.



MAP 1. Lào Cai Province, northern Vietnam

Over time this migration, combined with major social unrest in southern China in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, caused many minorities of the Chinese provinces of Guizhou, Sichuan, Guangxi, and Yunnan—where the majority of the Hmong in China still live today, numbering an estimated 2.7 million⁹—to migrate south. Many Hmong thus settled in the ranges of the Indochina Peninsula to practice subsistence agriculture, often combined with opium poppy cultivation. In Vietnam, where they are officially called H’*mông*, they have been present since the late eighteenth century. Indeed, Vietnam is probably the first Indochinese country into which the Hmong migrated. During the colonial period in Tonkin (1883–1954), a number of Hmong opted to join the Vietnamese Nationalists and communists,

while many Hmong who had converted to Catholicism sided with the French. Accordingly, after the Việt Minh victory, many pro-French Hmong migrated to Laos and South Vietnam, while those remaining in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) had to accept living under communist rule. For those staying in the northern highlands of Vietnam, traditional trade in coffin wood with China and in poppy cultivation—both legal until 1992–1993—guaranteed a regular cash income.

The scholarly literature on the Hmong dwelling in Southeast Asia is now abundant and over the past fifty years has sprung from field research throughout the peninsula.¹⁰ Focusing upon highland groups in northern Vietnam, it includes important early military and missionary texts from the French colonial period, produced in the years 1885–1925, that provide a rich source of data regarding trading practices among highland minorities and between highlanders and Kinh traders, the main agents in the “Tonkinese” highland marketplaces. Readily available colonial publications include those from the Pavie mission, Pierre Lefèvre-Pontalis, Henri Girard, Auguste Louis-M Bonifacy, A. Raquez, Laurent-Joseph Gaide, Emile Lunet de Lajonquière, Emile Diguët, Henri D’Ollone, Maurice Abadie, and François Marie Savina.¹¹ After 1954, ethnographic studies of highlanders produced by the DRV and directly influenced by the Soviet Union essentially maintained a cautious attitude toward the borderlands and the highlanders, guided by military security priorities.¹² This left very little possibility for scholarly research by either local or outside ethnologists and linguists. After winning the Reunification War in 1975, new Vietnamese research focused on categorizing and providing selective descriptive ethnographies aimed at firmly attaching the highland economy to the centrally planned one. In the early 1990s, decollectivization and economic liberalization then opened the door to a growing number of very good studies conducted by a younger generation of Vietnamese social scientists¹³ and a small number of Hmong intellectuals.¹⁴

Much can thus be said on the economic practices of the Hmong based on an array of monographs and studies produced chiefly in China, Thailand, and Laos, in addition to Vietnam. The Hmong are a truly transnational group, and we will treat them as such rather than confining them to the particular Vietnamese context and to the minority/majority trope.

At the time of the 1999 National Census, there were 787,604 Hmong living in mountainous Vietnam north of Hà Tĩnh Province, with a concentration in Hà Giang (183,994), Lai Châu (170,460), Lào Cai (123,778), and Sơn La (114,578) provinces. In the late 1990s, in search of new economic opportunities and, in many cases, at the government's invitation, several thousand Hmong also moved into Vietnam's Central Highlands, particularly into Đắk Lắk Province, where the 1999 Census registered 10,891 such individuals. Hmong livelihoods are still today overwhelmingly based on a combination of subsistence and commercial agriculture, rooted in kinship ties and complemented by the hunting and gathering of forest products. Household livelihoods are also diversified by the occasional trade of forest products and by-products of agriculture, such as cardamom, rice, and maize alcohol. Additional income derived from the tourist trade and wage work outside the community remains minor compared to these activities, but is nonetheless present.

Methods

Our investigation into the trade networks and livelihoods of a number of Hmong women in Sa Pa District builds upon information gathered over the past ten years from a large variety of sources. This information was gained either directly by the authors during yearly visits to Lào Cai Province, by state researchers commissioned from the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences in Hà Nội, or by graduate students working on location in several districts of Lào Cai Province. Discussions have also been undertaken with People's Committee representatives at a range of hierarchical levels and with different ethnic backgrounds, both in Sa Pa District and in Lào Cai City, the provincial capital. In Sa Pa District, interviews have been undertaken with Hmong, Yao (Dao), Giáy, and Kinh women producing and selling textiles in the marketplace; Hmong and Yao women and young girls selling textiles on the streets; and Kinh men and women operating shops with textile goods or related items. In-depth interviews have also been undertaken with a number of long-term residents in and around Sa Pa, including male and female Hmong and Kinh. The situation described in this article reflects the state of the textile commodity flows as of July 2007.

Theoretical Underpinnings

ACTOR-ORIENTED LIVELIHOOD STUDIES

A livelihood analysis is utilized here to direct attention to the assets and activities—and access to these, mediated by institutions and social relations—that together determine the livings that individuals involved with these textile trade networks are able to make.¹⁵ Frank Ellis has argued convincingly that individual and household livelihoods are shaped by “local and distinct institutions (e.g., local customs regarding access to common property resources, local and national land tenure rules), and by social relations (gender, caste, kinship and so on), as well as by economic opportunities.”¹⁶ While there are a multitude of approaches to livelihood studies, the majority point to the need to understand assets and vulnerabilities (the presence or absence of forms of capital: human, physical, natural, financial, and social), strategies (how people deploy or exploit existing assets), and access or barriers to resources (defined by social relations, ideologies, and institutions).¹⁷ This livelihood formation is an ongoing process, as argued by Holly Hapke and Devan Ayyanketil, “in which the various elements may change from season to season or from year to year as assets are built up and eroded and as access to resources and opportunities change.”¹⁸

Individuals and households often attempt to diversify their livelihood strategies so as to be able to provide sustainable livelihood opportunities and enhance livelihood security while mitigating risks, resisting shocks and stresses, and increasing their resilience.¹⁹ Such livelihood diversification in a rural context is, according to Ellis, “the process by which rural families construct a diverse portfolio of activities and social support capabilities in their struggle for survival and in order to improve their standards of living.”²⁰ Engaging in new income opportunities, increasing the range of crops grown, or undertaking a mix of agricultural, livestock, and off-farm activities are all examples of diversification.²¹ This focus on diversification helps us to examine the *fluidity* of livelihoods, a factor that, it has been argued, has been chiefly overlooked to date in livelihood approaches. As Bounthong Bouahom, Linkham Douangsavanh, and Jonathan Rigg contest, “the extent to which livelihoods are being constantly reworked, particularly when the wider economic context is fluid, is often underplayed.”²²

In addition, recent calls have been made for more inclusive, actor-oriented approaches to livelihood studies, allowing for the recognition of cultural, historical, and spatial dynamics of livelihoods.²³ In response, we also draw here from actor-oriented approaches to center attention on the interactions and social relations among actors, rooted within local socioeconomic, political, and cultural dynamics.²⁴ This allows us to give more preeminence to the lived experiences and voices of individual actors, as well as focusing upon their experiences of “development” and modernity—for example, while taking part in market exchanges.²⁵

COMMODITY FLOWS AND SYSTEMS OF PROVISION

Placed against a backdrop of actor-oriented livelihood studies, our research emphasizes the complex exchange networks that exist with regard to the production and trade of highlander women’s textiles in Lào Cai Province. To do so, we draw upon the body of commodity chain literature, which has grown rapidly in the social sciences in recent years.²⁶ This literature focuses primarily on the movement of a commodity through a series of phases, with special attention to links between production, distribution, and consumption. Commodity chain analysis has been identified by Deborah Leslie and Suzanne Reimer as having three traditions, namely, the global commodity chain approach, the commodity circuit approach, and the systems of provision approach.²⁷ We will utilize the systems of provision approach, which examines “the consequence of distinct relationships between material and cultural practices spanning the production, distribution and consumption of goods.”²⁸ This approach recognizes the importance of different cultural meanings attached to commodities and acknowledges that different industries have diverse dynamics, making possible a more critical take on producer-consumer relations.²⁹

This article will also stress the importance of understanding commodity chains as incorporating both vertical and horizontal dimensions. A vertical analysis follows the trade of a specific commodity, examining all the steps along the way and the negotiations required to move a good from producer to ultimate consumer. A horizontal analysis compares practices that occur regarding different commodities, or commodity chains of the same commodity.³⁰ Both vertical and horizontal dimensions are examined in this article

so that each specific node is identified and examined in view of how it influences the overall chain and final consumption. A picture can then be drawn of local, national, and global interconnections regarding these trading systems.

In sum, the framework for this study rests upon three bodies of literature. Livelihood studies draw our attention to how the access people have to specific resources mediates their livelihood decisions and why they decide to take up certain livelihood opportunities. An actor-oriented approach to such studies stresses that individuals operate within a complex and dynamic system of socioeconomic, cultural, and political structures. To gain further nuanced insight into these livelihoods, a commodity chain analysis, taking a systems of provision approach, focuses on both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of these chains, highlighting the goods that move within them, the actors involved, and the multiple sites of interaction. With such a framework we investigate how the commodity chains of highlander textiles that originate in Lào Cai Province work, and what such commodity chains mean for the livelihoods of the Hmong women involved.

Following the Thread: Highland Textile Commodity Chains

In Sa Pa District, Lào Cai Province, the clothes worn by Hmong men and women are traditionally made of hemp, dyed indigo blue and adorned with embroidery. Producing such clothing is a lengthy and laborious process, consuming much of the time and energy of the women who craft these items amidst the demanding activities associated with everyday agricultural work. Hemp itself is a material requiring special inputs, with families devoting the finest soils available in household gardens to its cultivation. Rarely do Hmong men partake in producing the hemp fabric. In addition to sowing, cultivating, and harvesting hemp crops, these women process the fibers and spin them into threads before they are woven into cloth on narrow looms. It is also typically women who assume the task of transforming the plain cloth into finished clothing, tending the indigo plants from which they generate the dye to color the hemp, dyeing and embroidering or batikting the fabric sections, and finally assembling the pieces together into useable wear.

Different embroidered designs adorn these textiles, and these days acrylic thread often replaces the dyed silk threads long purchased from Chinese

and Kinh traders. As among Hmong elsewhere, all the embroidered motifs signify aspects of Hmong material and symbolic culture. Corresponding to themes meaningful in Hmong daily life, embroidery takes the form of geometrical representations of animals, such as pigs and chickens, as well as plants or objects, including ploughs and baskets.³¹

The clothes worn by Hmong women of Sa Pa District are relatively less decorated than those of the Hmong in other districts within Lào Cai Province, such as Mường Khương and Bắc Hà. In the latter locations, Hmong women often wear skirts that require about fifteen days to construct, with fabric that is virtually covered with embroidery and tightly pleated, stretching to about five to six meters in length when pulled straight.³² Unlike the Hmong elsewhere on the peninsula, Sa Pa women usually produce only one such handmade skirt before they wed and have as a minimum another for childbirth and another in which they are buried. These skirts are understood to link a woman to her common ancestors and thus constitute an important aspect of identity. It is through the particular clothing a woman wears that she can be recognized by her ancestors after death.³³ Hmong women who wear these skirts elsewhere in Lào Cai Province and beyond usually make several sets of clothing annually for everyday use by themselves, their husbands, and their children.

Next we will discuss how these textiles have been integrated into highland commodity chains. Two specific chains are particularly illustrative of the extensive array of scales and actors present in the full spectrum identified with regard to the trade of traditional textiles by Hmong highlander women to date. What these chains make especially clear is the complex and socially embedded nature of these trading linkages, characterized by actors in diverse positions with respect to ethnicity, gender, and power.

THE CHAINS

Commodity Chain One: Locally Centered Trade

In the early 1990s, when overseas tourists began to trickle into Lào Cai Province and Sa Pa town again, a few elderly Hmong women saw an opportunity to sell trinkets and pieces of cloth. Why? Because they remembered the occasional times when they or their parents had been able to sell textile goods to French colonial tourists enjoying the climate and scenery in

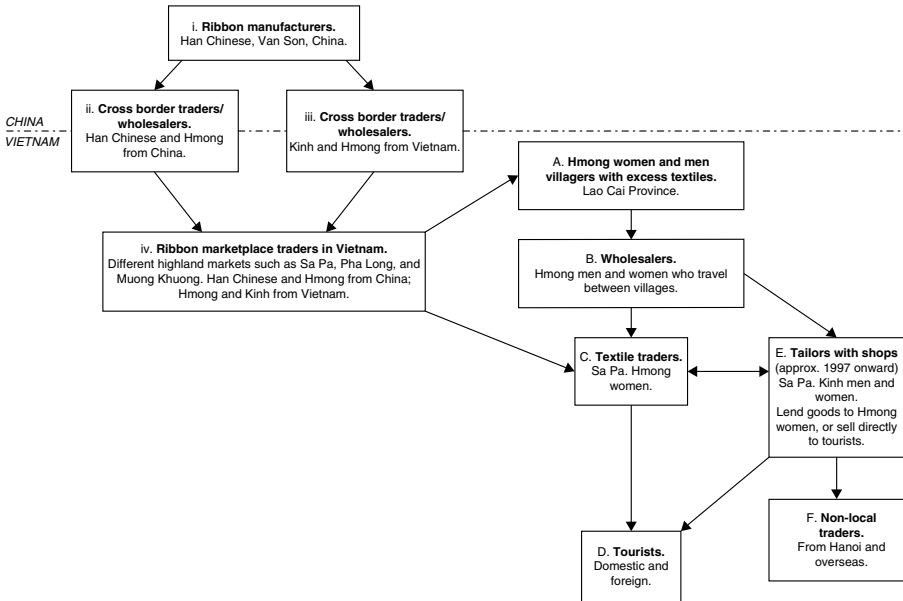


FIGURE 1. Commodity chain one: Hmong textiles and related cross-borders trade of ribbons.

“Chapa” before 1945. Backpacker tourists in the 1990s were quick to purchase such “authentic” cultural artifacts, generally worn out pieces of cloth with intricate embroidery, and new Hmong garments were rarely sold.

Since then, however, tourist demand for Hmong textiles has outgrown the ability of the local women traders to dispose of old garments or even produce new textiles themselves. Imaginative Hmong men and women have therefore decided to search the villages distant from Sa Pa and purchase used textiles from Hmong villagers, therefore starting to act as wholesalers. They begin our first commodity chain, shown in Figure 1 (points A and B). Hmong women in Sa Pa (C) then purchase sections of old Hmong embroidery from these wholesalers and either sell them as they are or graft them onto cotton backgrounds, the cotton being purchased in the Sa Pa marketplace from Kinh traders. In 1995–1996 these pieces were commonly made into simple cushion covers by the Hmong, some completely handmade and others constructed using pedal-powered sewing machines. To suit the demands of Western backpacker consumers, smaller items such as bags, hats, and money belts also began to be fashioned. As ambulant traders on the streets of Sa Pa, the Hmong women would then parade their crafts to

tourist clientele (D). Since 2002, however, a space has been reserved by the People's Committee for the highlander women traders in the upstairs section of the Sa Pa marketplace for such trading, a development to which we will return shortly.³⁴

Along with embroidery that they undertake themselves, Hmong women also often decorate their clothes and commodities with colorful embroidered ribbons. These adornments add to the commodity chain another distinct spatial dimension—this time a cross-border one. The trade and consumption of ribbons alone incorporates many more actors in what could be considered a connecting commodity chain (points i–iv in Figure 1). The ribbons begin their journey in China, purchased usually from Han Chinese manufacturers and traders located in Van Son (across the border from Pha Long) (i). Both Han Chinese and Hmong from China (ii) and Hmong and Kinh from Vietnam (iii) purchase these ribbons either from the manufacturers directly or from traders in China for cross-border trade, using different crossing points.³⁵ Back in Vietnam, the cross-border traders will often wholesale to other traders in highland marketplaces such as Sa Pa, Pha Long, and Mường Khương (iv) or sell direct to customers in these markets, namely, Kinh textile traders and Hmong women purchasing these goods for their own use or for the production of tourist items.

The period from about 1997 onward marked the introduction of new styles of pseudotraditional clothes by Kinh shopkeepers and tailors who had established businesses in town and started to produce and sell items such as waistcoats and shirts made from Hmong textiles (E). For these new items there thus emerged a trading link between Hmong women traders and wholesalers selling used articles of clothing and Kinh tailors. These tailors refurbished the clothes, which were then either sold directly to tourists from shops on the main streets in town (D) or “lent” back to Hmong, who itinerantly traded the goods on a commission-like basis, paying the Kinh tailors only as items were sold (link E to C). In 1999 there were three such shops where Hmong and Yao were able to sell textiles to Kinh traders in town. Hmong and Yao women commented that they participated in this trade only reluctantly, citing unfavorable terms of trade with the local Kinh shopkeepers, who insisted that the quality of the second-hand textiles the highlanders were initially selling to them was “terrible and poor” and thus maintained extremely low prices.³⁶

Quickly, this trade in pseudotraditional goods reached Hà Nội (F), where items could be purchased in a number of shops, with Kinh shopkeepers in Hà Nội placing orders for quantities of ready-made goods with the Kinh shopkeepers in Sa Pa.³⁷ These products even began to appear in such distant destinations as Hong Kong and London, as overseas traders paid visits to both Sa Pa and Hà Nội and purchased goods for trade elsewhere.

These evolving trade relationships have resulted in a new interconnected world of actors in Sa Pa District. Hmong women have found themselves engaging in direct exchanges with other highlanders and Kinh, while trading products not for immediate consumption more frequently than ever before. This gendered trade stands out in part because the more ancient trade in nonconsumption goods between the highlanders and the Kinh was an occupation assumed by highlander men. Also, it seems that ethnic ties between Hmong villagers and Hmong textile wholesalers have favored the latter in their role in this early node of the commodity chain, while Kinh actors have remained positioned at later phases of production.

What is also illustrated by this commodity chain is how the meanings that the Hmong attach to their worn-out clothes have been gradually transformed through time and space. Prior to the resurrection of international tourism in the 1990s, these textiles were considered valuable only when new, and they were donned most frequently by young adults in efforts to attract the attention of youngsters of the opposite sex. Hence, these clothes were not commodities “intended by their producers principally for exchange”³⁸ or originally designated for the sort of trade that developed. Instead, they were items inscribed with particular social and cultural meaning for those who wore them. Previously, these clothes had been indiscriminately discarded as rags once they were well worn. In contrast, a new economic value is now placed upon the older clothes of the Hmong via their role in the sale of a range of different products intended for tourists, generating a most unexpected source of income for these highlanders.

Commodity Chain Two: Numerous Actors and Differential Power

The second network example we present brings to the fore even more complex power dynamics and is the most recent network to have developed in the highlands. On the rise since 2001 are a number of new shops in Sa Pa

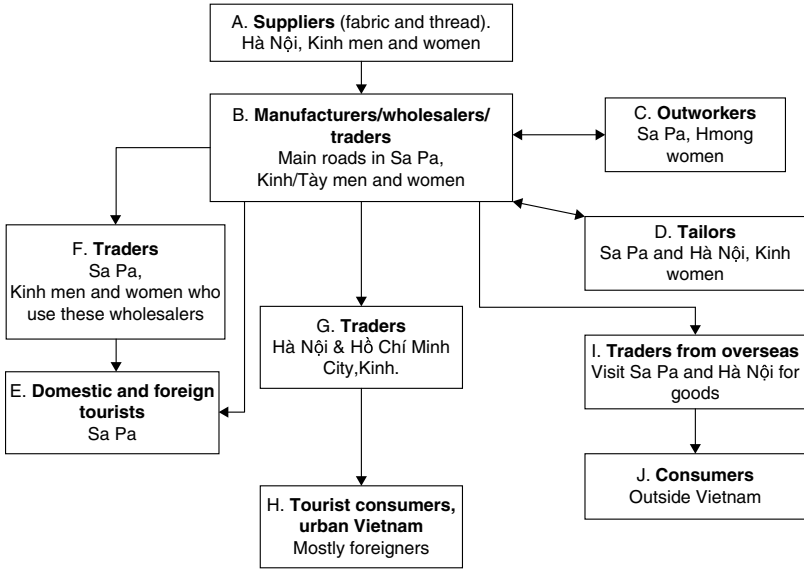


FIGURE 2. Commodity chain two: Expanding both scope and scale.

(Figure 2, point B) run by enterprising Kinh and Tày, both men and women, that feature items such as wall hangings and cushion covers specially designed to cater to the more upscale tourist market. The client base in Sa Pa for these specific products includes not only foreigners with more means than the average backpacker but also more affluent lowland Kinh tourists (E). The owners of these specialized shops subcontract to Hmong women (C), who, while maintaining creative license over the actual patterns, embroider small patches conforming to shapes designated by the shopkeepers. Then Kinh women—and to date only women have undertaken this task—create wall hangings by amalgamating these patches onto larger pieces of fabric using sewing machines (D). The heavyweight cotton cloth used as the background for these pieces is ordered from Hà Nội (A). While chiefly for sale in shops in Sa Pa (B and F), these products now have a much broader geographical reach, with the finished goods available in Hà Nội, Hội An, and Hồ Chí Minh City (G and H). Overseas traders travel to Sa Pa annually, transporting the goods even further to Europe, North America, and Australasia, where they are marketed as “ethnic crafts” (I and J).

Danh, a Kinh seller of these specialty goods, came to Sa Pa in 2001 from a nearby lowland town and set up his business with the help of his nephew.³⁹

In order to establish his enterprise, Danh gathered start-up funds from his savings, family, and friends, and even now, when in need of additional capital, he is still more likely to approach family members than a bank. Danh orders the cloth used in his hangings by phone from suppliers in Hà Nội—contacts that he initially established in person—and the suppliers deliver the material by train. Also transported from the Hà Nội environs are the threads used by Hmong women in their embroidery of this cloth, which come from the town of Vạn Phúc, renowned for its silk. Five local Kinh women with machine sewing experience, who had originally approached Danh's shop in search of employment, worked on site assembling the goods in 2001.

Approximately twenty Hmong and Yao women from two nearby hamlets were undertaking embroidery for Danh's business at the time of our interviews. In order to assess the competencies of potential embroiderers, Danh invites the women to embroider small pieces of cloth with patterns familiar to them, thereby gauging their skill levels in carrying out the task. Having established these working relations, the Hmong and Yao who embroider for Danh deliver their completed pieces and pick up new orders when visiting the Sa Pa marketplace during weekends.

From the time when Danh inaugurated his original shop in 2001, his business has grown significantly to include four other stores favorably located along one of the main Sa Pa streets. Besides this expansion, he has also been very eager to further develop his exporting networks. As of 2004 Danh maintained only one such link, through a French tourist who visited Sa Pa yearly and purchased large quantities of goods for retail sale in Paris. Danh desired to further extend his trade into markets in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan, but he felt that prohibitively high customs taxes on large quantities of goods hindered him from doing so.

Ly, an ethnic Tày from the lower Van Ban District south of Sa Pa, also operates a shop on the main street of Sa Pa. However, she utilizes this store primarily as a wholesale base for her extensive retail linkages with other shops, both in Sa Pa and Hà Nội. She told us that in 2006 there were three such shops functioning as wholesale operations in Sa Pa. Her goods are sold to about fifteen different stores in Hà Nội, as well as to shops in Hồ Chí Minh City and Hội An. These businesses purchase Ly's products strictly on a credit basis, so that Ly receives payment only when the items have actually

been retailed. Some of Ly's other customers arrive from Thailand, the United States, and France, a number of them paying annual visits, to buy large quantities of her stock to sell in those countries. She explains that her embroidery work is done primarily by Hmong women from whom she might purchase up to 10,000,000VNĐ worth of embroidery on a market day. Ly lends the women all the necessary raw materials, namely, fabric and silk thread that she orders from Nam Định in the delta. The highlander women are paid 3,000VNĐ (20 cents) for each small embroidered patch, of which they can make two to three a day. Ly resells these for 3,500VNĐ (23 cents) each or incorporates them into larger items. Ly considers the Hmong to be very honest people and thus trusts that they will always deliver the goods to her on time. When the Hmong women request advance payments for their work so they may make market purchases, she is comfortable about complying, as they always repay her with the embroidered goods shortly thereafter.

This second commodity chain, illustrated by the cases of Danh and Ly, introduces another intricate web of sociospatial interactions, with transactions that encompass global dimensions and three new labor relationships: first, highlander women are incorporated into this chain in part through an outworker arrangement (C); second, Sa Pa shopkeepers are connected with lowland markets via raw material purchases (A); and, third, considerable numbers of wage laborers dedicated to assembling textiles on location in shops in Sa Pa and Hà Nội are integrated in the chain (D). The power dynamics characterizing these relationships have therefore been redefined once again, and as such, it is feasible to argue that the introduction of outworkers is an indication of emerging competitive flexibility, as well as an increasing dependence on the most vulnerable of workers. At the same time, however, we see that the Kinh and Tày shopkeepers—both from historically dominant ethnicities in the region—are simultaneously reliant both upon lowland trade linkages in acquiring raw materials and also upon the Hmong women who contribute the very centerpieces of their goods for sale, the actual embroidered textiles. Given this scenario, one would think that the Hmong women would maintain a certain degree of influence in maneuvering these arrangements, which they do indeed exercise at times, bargaining the prices of their pieces. Yet more often than not, it is the

shopkeepers who dictate the pricing of the embroidered segments, as there are usually other highlander women who seem prepared to embroider for these establishments.

It is due largely to the rapid expansion of both domestic and foreign tourism in Vietnam that shopkeepers have achieved such success in trading these commodities. In Sa Pa, along with this newly booming tourism,⁴⁰ significant changes in the physical landscape of the town have also come about as outsiders aspiring to get a foot in the door of this “ethnic craft” trade set up shop. This movement has resulted in the appearance of many new retailing spaces being rented by such entrepreneurs. All the while, we see that even though highlanders play a central role in this commodity chain, in reality its development and organization is controlled by outside business people. Consequently, the underlying arrangements of practices sustaining the production and consumption of these goods are at the same time demarcating very specific power and wealth differences.⁴¹

THE OTHER ACTORS

There are still two other important groups of actors involved in these chains not yet mentioned. Firstly, institutional actors, namely, the state and its representatives; secondly, the on-site consuming actors, namely, the tourists.

The State and Its Representatives

It is necessary to draw into this analysis the relationships between the Hmong and the Vietnamese state’s representatives because “to the extent that livelihood strategies are derived from assets and access to them, they are inextricably linked to social power, which is reflected in and exercised through production and control of space.”⁴² The state, as a defining actor in such hierarchies, effectively shapes the actual operations of these chains. In the case of highland textile trading, politics and the “rules of the game” are key contextual factors influencing the nature of power and gender relations. By determining the spatiality of trade in terms of who is permitted to trade where and who is allowed to cross the border at which entry points, these features ultimately govern access. Moreover, these constraints further circumscribe the available livelihood options from which people can choose—in this case, the right to trade. The state continues to maintain firm

control over activities in Sa Pa, as elsewhere in Vietnam, and even though the Kinh represent only 15 percent of the total population of Sa Pa District, their representatives monopolize all the vital positions within the state apparatus. It is thus the Sa Pa People's Committee that officially directs the future shape and planning of Sa Pa Town, with the highlanders finding themselves in a position limited by a number of factors, including generally low levels of literacy and Vietnamese language proficiency, especially for women. Hence, these highlanders are overwhelmingly excluded from district politics, and their voices are seldom heard. Such negotiations, contestations, and struggles thus take place within the context of a specific political and social organization that clearly bears upon outcomes and actions.⁴³

Inequalities in power relations are illustrated by the development and use of one particular highland marketplace popular with both domestic and foreign tourists, the Sa Pa marketplace. For the small group of highlander women selling goods in the town, the prevailing way of doing so in the past was in an itinerant fashion, canvassing the main streets and actively approaching tourists in an effort to persuade them to buy their wares, communicating either in basic English or by miming. The period 1996–1997 marked a transformation in the Sa Pa marketplace due to an initiative carried out by the local People's Committee. Undergoing massive renovations, the original wall-less, one-story, tile-roofed market was reinvented as two large, two-storied, concrete buildings with walkways in between on both levels. In the upper portion of one of these buildings, called the “ethnic market,” local state authorities have allotted highlanders space to sell their goods, at first free of charge. However, in 2000, rather than being utilized for its state-designated purposes, this hall was frequented only by a few Kinh who used this space as a karaoke hall, and there were no actual sellers. This changed the following year when a few Hmong and Yao women could be seen selling their goods there, neither storing their goods on site nor paying a users' fee. By 2004, the room was filled with Hmong and Yao women sellers who paid a monthly rent, some with wooden chests doubling as display tables that could be padlocked for their goods to be stored in relative safety overnight.

In such circumstances, this commodity chain research has revealed a number of situations where power relations are often very subtle among the

actors involved, working on localized yet highly complex spatial scales. Firstly, while the women appreciate the shelter from the climate that this site provides them, they also bemoan the fact that if articles go missing, the market management does not feel compelled to reimburse them in any way, even though they pay a fee to locate on this site and the hall is supposedly locked at night. Secondly, due to this relocation, a close watch is now kept over the highlander women selling in this space by both the police and the market management.

The Consuming Tourists

On the whole, tourists in the highlands—the principle on-site consumers of the commodities produced by Hmong women—can currently be broadly divided into three socioeconomic categories. These include Western travelers or backpackers on limited budgets, group travelers from Vietnam with more middle-class means, and independent affluent travelers of both Vietnamese and overseas origins.⁴⁴ Of these three, it is the Western backpackers who maintain the most direct and deliberate forms of interpersonal exchange with the Hmong highlanders, whereas other individuals tend to do little more than gaze at them.⁴⁵

Foreign tourists of the “backpacker” type are the most important on-location customer base for the Hmong women selling textiles. They are also the group that the People’s Committee has been happy to ignore as much as possible. The People’s Committee does not promote specific services for such tourists, as they do not represent a structural part of the master plan for future tourist development in the district.⁴⁶ Yet they appear just as determined to visit the town anyway, judging by the regularity with which backpackers arrive year in year out, amounting on average to 21 percent of all visitors to the town.⁴⁷ Backpackers regularly visit to see the ethnic market, visit minority villages on treks, and have a break from the hot and crowded lowlands.⁴⁸ They are keen to head to a local village on a trek, but because of language limitations, actual contact with the highlanders is generally limited to chatting with Hmong and Yao women traders who can speak some English or French, talking with young Hmong women who are now acting as guides with very good English, or simply playing with children when visiting a village.

In terms of numbers and proportion, while backpackers are outpaced by national tourists, international tourist arrivals continue to increase. It is the foreign tourists, and especially the female backpacker crowd, that the Hmong women prefer to undertake trade with. These Hmong ignore Kinh tourists, in part because of the derogatory language these Kinh often use to talk about them.⁴⁹ Buying textiles in local shops is another option for the backpackers, although it tends to be the older, more financially comfortable segment of this group that visits these shops, especially if they are accompanied by a Kinh guide, who will often suggest the tourists purchase goods from Kinh-operated shops.

Domestic and foreign tourists alike still commonly believe that the production process of the textiles they take an interest in purchasing from Sa Pa shops involve only highlanders. We would thus argue that what has occurred in such commodity chains, with the increased involvement of outsiders, is the creation of a “veil of authenticity.” In reality, as we now know, there are far more players on the stage behind the veil. Also, what we find are new or changed economic values ascribed to the textiles by a range of diverse actors of distinct ethnicities, power, and wealth, while the cultural values for the Hmong women themselves appear to have remained fairly untouched, the women often laughing at the fact that they can offer their worn out clothes for sale and someone will actually buy them!⁵⁰

Hmong Diversification of Livelihoods: A Selective Decision

When one attempts to analyze the livelihood diversification of Hmong individuals and households involved with textile trade in highland northern Vietnam, the flexibility in their decision making becomes clear. However, as well as noting a variety of different means by which a household and its members may diversify their livelihoods, many authors have moved to establish a system of classification of this diversification. Such typologies introduce somewhat dichotomous approaches to the concept. When discussed as a positive factor, diversification is put forth as an intentional household strategy, an avenue for reducing rural inequalities, or a safety valve for the poor. Alternatively, more negative interpretations see diversification as a response to crisis and a feature that, by reallocating critical resources away from

agriculture, can further increase rural inequalities.⁵¹ In their work on rural Laos, Bounthong Bouahom, Linkham Douangsavanh, and Jonathan Rigg provide a conceptual distinction between these seemingly opposing understandings by drawing attention to the differences between “distress diversification,” or diversification for survival, and what they term “progressive diversification.”⁵² They argue that “diversification may be a reflection of proletarianization and the immiserating effects of modernization and market integration (although this is clearly a source of considerable debate), or a means by which rural households can lever themselves into higher-return activities and occupations leading to improving standards of living.”⁵³

Developing these discussions here and taking into account the interpretations of the findings outlined above, we argue that there could actually be a third approach to the diversification of livelihoods, which we call “selective diversification,” we argue that distress is not the overriding motivation for Hmong women in Lào Cai Province to undertake this production and trade. Rather, they explained to us that they engaged in these activities for a number of other reasons, including the enjoyment of socializing in the market, the extra cash for treats made available at times from their sales, and the perceived comfort of working in the marketplace, where they are sheltered from the sun, heat, and rain, as opposed to the exposed agricultural fields. During periods when more intensive labor is required for crop cultivation, these women would once again shift their focus to the home and hamlet.⁵⁴ In addition, to some extent it is conceivable to view the women’s involvement in these commodity chains as instances of progressive diversification, particularly in the example of the first commodity chain discussed above. Yet, when we turn to the second commodity chain we find Hmong women involved as wage workers, as it were, in a production process that they did not begin or devise themselves. In this case it is the Kinh shopkeepers rather than the Hmong who have undertaken an innovative approach to product diversification; the Hmong only responding to a demand.

We argue instead that what we have observed here, especially in the case of the second commodity chain, is a group of Hmong women who are deciding to make the most of an opportunity that has come their way, yet who are also not pained to “let it slide” when other responsibilities take priority. That is, their involvement in this textile trade is selective, intentionally

undertaken so as to fit with the pluriactivity that makes up their livelihoods. This outlook toward participation in the trade was identified clearly by Ly, the female shopkeeper introduced earlier who hired Hmong women to embroider patches. She commented, “I don’t know all the people who work for me. We call them in off the street sometimes. We just see them as they go by when they’re embroidering or sitting on the stairs, and if they’re interested they do some work for us.”⁵⁵ Moreover, when momentary lapses in the textile trade occur or sales opportunities reach a standstill, these Hmong women readily adapt, as they do in cases where returning to the village is necessitated because of pregnancy, a child’s illness, or changing family circumstances.⁵⁶

The workings of this selective diversification become even more apparent when one adopts a temporal perspective, thus revealing the ways in which these processes are rooted in a particular history. Hmong women could occasionally sell vegetables, rice, trinkets, or textiles during the French colonial period, but these trading activities stopped when the French war with the Việt Minh broke out in 1946. With the French civilians gone, highlanders in the region reverted back to their customary rural economy. In the 1960s Kinh settlers returned, sent by the state under the New Economic Zones scheme.⁵⁷ Between 1960 and the early 1990s the economy of the highlanders was tentatively reorganized along the national agricultural collectivization scheme with the introduction of the cooperative system. However, many highlanders explained that in reality they continued with their kinship-based subsistence livelihoods. In the 1990s, old economic activities such as opium growing and the sale of timber and other forest products were severely curtailed with the adoption of the Land Law of 1993, but concurrently, new avenues for trade were made possible for the highlanders, some of these across the border. The international tourists reappeared en masse and the tourist trade resumed, now following multiple patterns.

In light of the considerable changes in economic conditions and the selective involvement of Hmong highlanders in a range of different trades over time, we believe it necessary to question the extent to which highlander women actually desire to become further incorporated in these and similar textile commodity chains. Are we led to believe that these women might be “missing out” by our latent assumptions regarding success, tinged with Western biases of progress, economic achievement, and capitalist drive? Or

might it be that they are just not clever enough to jump on an opportunity as it presents itself? A more productive approach, perhaps, is to unravel the microscale processes forming the various nodes of these commodity chains in order to more fully understand the motivations underlying such diversification. Rather than narrowly presuming that the motives and aspirations of these Hmong highlander women are based upon notions of modernization conceived only as economic *growth*, we need to further reflect upon the impetuses compelling their involvement in the trade economy, particularly here in textile trade. We know from interviews that from 1998 to 2006 the trade undertaken by these women was not sufficiently viable to support an entire household, with incomes falling far below those generated through regular farming activities. It was, however, enough to supplement their farming incomes, enabling households to provide for extra labor in times of family shortages and, as previously discussed, was thought of by some women as a welcome respite from household and field activities. A number of different purchases were reported to be facilitated by textile sales, the principal one being a meal in the marketplace, followed by small provisions such as salt, monosodium glutamate, cooking oil, cucumbers, fruit, and sesame seed cakes. The women who remained overnight in the town also necessarily allotted some of these earnings toward accommodation. Those fortunate at times to make larger profits often dedicated these to purchasing medicine, or labor for their fields; if they were able to save over time, these earnings could contribute significantly toward investing in a motorbike.

Of the Hmong women textile traders with whom we spoke, many—particularly those producing embroidered patches—were satisfied with their current level of involvement in this trade. Indeed, these women noted that they felt no desire to further engage in the more complex, even potentially global interactions this trade opened up. Several explained to us that intensifying their participation would bring about certain expectations to which they did not wish to conform, such as adjusting work to particular standards and experiencing increasing demands to produce goods within a delineated time frame. These were pressures that the women simply did not want, affirming instead that they preferred their current ways.⁵⁸ This reflects what Norman Long has also observed, that “producers and agricultural workers sometimes fear that, if they become too heavily committed to outside

markets and institutions, then critical interests can be threatened or marginalized. People may show strong allegiance to existing lifestyles, and to the defense of local forms of knowledge.”⁵⁹

Suggesting that this textile trade is unimportant for these households is not the point here. It is an economic undertaking of value, especially for women who are widowed or divorced. We argue, however, that along with income from other sources, including rice and cash crops such as cardamom, and taking into account their semisubsistence livelihoods upheld by long-standing cooperation with kin in their hamlets, this textile trade is not an *essential* component of household economies. Instead it constitutes a selective choice, which these Hmong women are able to opt for at will.

Conclusions

The specific trade we have explored in this article, the commodification of used clothing and textiles, interweaves old and new types of production, consumption, and livelihoods, bringing about varied and diverse patterns of economic activity. The processes we have seen taking place are complex, spanning a spectrum of actors, networks of divergent social relations, and uneven access to resources. These commodity chains indicate that a segment of Hmong society is operating in relatively new domains of production and exchange and indeed, has come to occupy new “action spaces.”⁶⁰ Imaginative adaptive reactions to market opportunities have taken place, with Hmong individuals playing the cracks in the system rather than trying to dominate or conquer. Hmong have invested in niche activities that put their customary skills to work, namely, embroidery, in a style reminiscent of another, long-standing niche strategy—the growing of poppies and selling of opium—and today’s sale of ecologically determined produce such as non-timber forest products, including cardamom. Yet at the same time, ethnic power relationships in the town, and indeed in the country as a whole, mean that new trading opportunities are being seized upon predominately by outside middle people and retailers while highlanders remain largely confined to an agriculture-based economy. Yet we also need to question whether the Hmong actually wish to become more involved in nonagricultural activities, or whether this limited and opportunistic diversification is a selective choice based on a combination of endogenous strategy and arising opportunities. It

is perfectly feasible and strategically justifiable that the Hmong in Sa Pa District may decide to keep a certain distance from the market economy. Combined with extremely low levels of market consumption by the average household and most probably in conjunction with a range of off-the-record activities more or less regularly conducted, such as illegal transborder trade, taxation-evading exchanges beyond the gaze of the state, and tampering with environmental protection legislations in the gathering of forest products for sale,⁶¹ their position is actually tenable. In sum, flexibility around a solid, culturally embedded economic core appears to be an important characteristic feature of Hmong livelihoods in Sa Pa District.

Pursuing this line of thinking, we would like to conclude by widening our reflection from this particular case study to issues pertaining to Hmong culture, economy, and political strategies that may shed some light on the economic behavior of the Hmong in Lào Cai. As a consequence of their particular history, the Hmong case harbors many complexities. Their troubled and violent past in Chinese territory, their land of origin, pushed a significant portion of their population to spontaneously migrate into the peninsula. To make their migration possible, an adapted economic practice was chosen to ensure political, economic, and identity survival, namely, mobile swiddening agriculture.⁶² This escape strategy required a social fission and a return to seminomadism among groups that were previously settled and, it is believed, that had long been practicing wet-rice agriculture. If this is historically true, it would suggest that the social system of those migrant Hmong groups was actively adjusting to their new circumstances.

In contrast with isolated populations only recently reached by external influences to become subject to hastened cultural integration or assimilation—one thinks, for instance, of Amazonian horticulturalists, Australian aboriginals, circumpolar Inuit—the resilience of Hmong in Vietnam is rooted in centuries of neighborly relations, quarrels, political and economic exploitation, rebellions, invasions, wars, genocides, and flights.⁶³ This can also be seen among ethnic minority groups in other locales in Vietnam. Philip Taylor has noted that the Cham Muslims, of whom there are 14,000 living in the Mekong Delta, are mobile, long-distance, border-dwelling, transnational producers and traders of home-woven and commercially purchased textiles. Cham Muslim household livelihood strategies also involve

diversification—their ever-shifting household economy mix including textile production, embroidery, their passage into and out of local and extralocal textile trade, and diversification into other trade goods. They, too, demonstrate transnational and gendered dimensions of their livelihood strategies as adaptations to shifting exigencies.⁶⁴ It is quite reasonable to think that minority societies that have been challenged in this manner and survived have developed a creative spirit of tenacious resistance to assimilation and subordination, a resistance not necessarily manifest as force, which has proven to be futile when faced with powerful opponents.

More than a few features resulting from a long history of adaptation may be pulled out to explain this robustness of the Hmong. These include being a stateless and thus fluid society, an ability to bend their economic system according to circumstances without altering their identity, social fission of local groups within a light and elastic lineage structure, an absence of territoriality, and a strict rule of clan exogamy—all factors that have favored geographic dispersal without wearing down a strong cultural core.⁶⁵

Indeed, Hmong mountain dwellers of the Vietnamese high region clearly do not define themselves in terms of a particular territoriality or a sense of belonging to a given nation-state. They are exemplarily nonterritorial, transnational, and noncitizens. Their identity referents are above all founded on blood and alliance, and primordial lineage ties exist regardless of distance and international borders. Furthermore, these Hmong do not entertain a desire to return to the group's geographic origins (mythical or real), nor have they any concrete intention of regaining a particular area of land somewhere. This translates into an absence of deep roots in one land or another.

This is therefore possibly an important explanatory element when it comes to trying to understand why Hmong mountain dwellers in Lào Cai are not necessarily stepping up to the economic and cultural pace of Vietnamese society. If the integrationist pressure becomes exceedingly strong, the most determined among them might decide to exercise their usual prerogative, and leave. The post-1975 exodus from Laos is one example of this decision. Indeed, since the end of the 1990s, thousands of Hmong households in Northern Vietnam have migrated spontaneously to settle on the plateaus of Vietnam's Central Highlands and from there have relocated again in eastern Cambodia and southeastern Laos.

Consequently, economic modernization among the Hmong in Vietnam proceeds while meeting some resistance, the forms of which are not random but combine local opportunities with inherited, specific traditions and the historical trajectory of the group. A lineage society with strong kinship ties and no overarching political organization that could be won over by the state, this is a flexible society that can resist economic and cultural change imposed from the outside, using its homegrown tools to adapt through diversified livelihoods, while sustaining its identity and ensuring its social reproduction. ■

SARAH TURNER is Associate Professor, Department of Geography, McGill University, Montréal. JEAN MICHAUD is Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Laval University. This article was originally presented at the 2006 Vietnam Update conference at Australian National University. It expands upon a paper published by Sarah Turner, "Trading Old Textiles: The Selective Diversification of Highland Livelihoods in Northern Vietnam," *Human Organization* 66, no. 4 (2007):389–404. The authors would like to thank Đặng Đức Phương, Vũ Ngọc Ánh, Chau, and Lam for their help gathering the data on which this article is based. Graduate students Lindsay Anderson, Christine Bonnin, Claire Tugault-Lafleur, and Laura Schoenberger also provided valuable assistance. Thanks also are due to Philip Taylor for his commitment to putting together this special edition and for his editorial comments. This research was facilitated by grants from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council, Canada; Fonds québécois de recherche sur la société et la culture, Québec, Canada; and National Geographic Society, United States.

ABSTRACT

Studies of ethnic minorities in upland northern Vietnam often emphasize how such groups are incorporated within the nation, and how members react to market liberalization. Yet, based on ethnographic research in Lào Cai Province, particularly among the Hmong, we argue that many highlanders see their situation quite differently. Combining locally embedded social, political, and economic forms with the imperatives of Vietnam's liberalization, they adapt their strategies and reinvent their livelihoods as they

see fit. What is absorbed and what is discarded depends on the opportunities that arise at any precise moment, not just on rational choice and economic benefit.

KEYWORDS: *Hmong, livelihoods, Lào Cai, commodity chains, textiles*

Notes

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38. A. Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 16.
39. All names are pseudonyms.
40. See Jean Michaud and Sarah Turner, "Contending Visions of Sa Pa, A Hill-Station in Vietnam," *Annals of Tourism Research* 33, no. 3 (2006): 785–808.

41. Norman Long and M. Villareal, "Small Product, Big Issues: Value Contestations and Cultural Identities in Cross-border Commodity Networks," *Development and Change* 29 (1998): 725–750.
42. Hapke and Ayyankeril, "Gender, the Work-Life Course and Livelihood Strategies in a South Indian Fish Market," 232.
43. Long, "Exploring Local/Global Transformations."
44. Michaud and Turner, "Contending Visions of Sa Pa, A Hill-Station in Vietnam."
45. While the trickle-down effects from the presence and interaction of the latter two categories in the Sa Pa economy is an undeniable factor in the town's current prosperity and indirectly influences Hmong economies, we do not have the necessary space to delve into those discussions here. See instead Michaud and Turner, "Contending Visions of Sa Pa, A Hill-Station in Vietnam."
46. Lào Cai Province People's Committee, *Quy chế đô thị Sapa 2004*, 3 vols. (Lào Cai, 2004).
47. Michaud and Turner, "Contending Visions of Sa Pa, A Hill-Station in Vietnam."
48. Michael DiGregorio, Pham Thi Quynh Phuong, Minako Yasui, *The Growth and Impact of Tourism in Sa Pa* (Hà Nội: Center for Natural Resources and Environmental Studies; Honolulu: East-West Center, 1997); M. Grindley, "Sa Pa Hotelier Survey," unpublished report (Hà Nội: Frontier-Vietnam, 1998).
49. Interviews with Hmong men, women, and young girls, various dates between 1999 and 2007.
50. Interviews with Hmong women, 2005 and 2006.
51. See Ellis, "Household Strategies and Rural Livelihood Diversification."
52. Bouahom, Douangsavanh, and Rigg, "Building Sustainable Livelihoods in Laos."
53. *Ibid.*, 613.
54. Interviews with Hmong market place traders, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007.
55. Interview with Tày female shopkeeper, 2006.
56. Interviews with Hmong women, 2006 and 2007.
57. See Andrew Hardy, *Red Hills: Migrants and the State in the Highlands of Vietnam* (London: Curzon and NIAS Monographs, 2002).
58. Interviews with Hmong women, 2005, 2006.
59. Norman Long, *Development Sociology: Actor Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2001), 228.
60. *Ibid.*, 236.
61. These are all activities that are visible on the village scene but about which Hmong prefer not to comment.

62. Christian Culas and Jean Michaud, "A Contribution to the Study of Hmong (Miao) Migrations and History," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (BKI)* 153, no. 2 (1997): 211–242.
63. Robert D. Jenks, *Insurgency and Social Disorder in Guizhou; The Miao Rebellion, 1854–1873* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994); Claudine Lombard-Salmon, *Un exemple d'acculturation chinoise: la province du Guizhou au XVIIIe siècle* [An Example in Chinese Acculturation: Guizhou Province in the 18th Century] (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1972).
64. See Philip Taylor, "Economy in Motion: Cham Muslim Traders in the Mekong Delta," *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 7, no. 3 (2006): 237–250; Philip Taylor, "Poor Policies, Wealthy Peasants: Alternative Trajectories of Rural Development in Vietnam," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 2, no. 2 (2007): 3–56.
65. Nicholas Tapp, *The Hmong of China; Context, Agency, and the Imaginary* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).