

A Study of Frontier People's Identity in Yunnan Section of Sino-Vietnamese Border Based on National Political Scenario

Haiyan Zhao¹, Daibao Lu²

¹*Yunnan Arts University, Yunnan, China*

²*Xinyang Agriculture and Forestry University, Henan, China*

Keywords: country, political scene, frontier people, identity.

Abstract: The establishment of an independent national state between China and Vietnam allows the border groups originally living in the same region to belong to different countries because of the division of national boundaries. The political, economic and cultural systems of the two countries have great impacts on the border people of China and Vietnam, thus forming their own different values, lifestyles and sense of national belonging. However, the recognition of the border people to the country they belong to is always connected with the specific and actual national interests and feelings, which requires the government to take full account of the opportunities for the acquisition of the rights and interests of the border people and the traditional expression in the construction of the national system.

1. Introduction

Identity is a term that appears frequently in today's society and is endowed with "soft power" with extraordinary energy. Chinese and foreign scholars have different definitions and explanations of what is "identity". Jim McGegan, a British scholar, argues that "identity is a collective phenomenon, not just an individual phenomenon. It is most frequently considered in terms of nationalism, referring to the characteristics that people in the territory of a national state are considered to have in common[1]". Yang Xiao, a domestic scholar, believes that identity is the product of social process and changes with the alterations of social system and social interests. The concept of identity has three basic characteristics: sociality, plasticity and coexistence[2]. However, no matter what the explanation is, Chinese and foreign scholars all think that identity is a kind of social behavior, group behavior, and constructs a variety of identity because of the changing and pluralistic characteristics of the boundary of individual social life space. Based on the change of border people's identity in Yunnan section of the Sino-Vietnamese border in modern times, this paper studies and reveals the problems of the border people's national identity, the relationship between state power and social order of border people, and the expression of border people's right of "discourse" in the national political scene.

2. Frontier People's Identity in Sino-Vietnamese Border Areas Before Modern Times

China and Vietnam are adjacent to each other. Historically, Vietnam has been an administrative region under the direct rule of the Chinese feudal dynasty since the Qin Dynasty. It has been influenced by China in politics, economy, history and culture.

Since the independence of the Song Dynasty, Vietnam has become a gateway and vassal state for all dynasties of China as a tributary and minister as well as a part of the traditional system of "world outlook" in ancient China. Although Vietnam was the "foreign vassal" of the Chinese feudal dynasty, it was still regarded as the "territory" of China. This concept of "territory" was evident in the process of dealing with the territorial disputes between Annan during the years of the emperor of Yongzheng in the Qing Dynasty. In the third year of Yongzheng reign (1725), Yunnan Governor Gao Qiyu preached: "Yunnan Kaihua Prefecture is adjacent to Annan border, and from the Kaihua Prefecture Mabo flood outside 40 miles to the small Hanoi under the lead plant mountain, there are six villages in Fengchunli, a book containing 12 stones of autumn grain. In the 28th year of Kangxi reign, it is integrate into Annan. ... Today, from Kaihua Prefecture to Ma Boxun, there are 120 miles, that is, there are 160 miles to the Xiaohe River under the Mountain of Lead Factory. There are still 80 miles outside the Xiaohe River of the Mountain of Lead Factory. There are two factories, Dulong and Nandan, which are the previous places of Yunnan. Although lost in the Ming dynasty, but they are the feudal kingdoms and should be checked together to be commissioned to establish boundaries.[3], Annan Biography Emperor Yongzheng said to his subordinates, "Since Anan is the vassal state, the land is all mine. Why should we care about the 40 miles? In addition, the 40-mile land in Yunnan is the interior of my country, and in Annan it is still the vassal state of mine, which makes no difference at all. [4] In the view of the Qing Dynasty, Annan was not only a vassal state, but also a "land of my own" under the jurisdiction. Therefore, it is necessary to assign the disputed land to Annan because it belongs to all the territory. Even in modern times, the Qing government's national situation was declining day by day, but for the sake of the so-called "edition of territory", they still spared no efforts to fight with France.

It can be seen that the "territory" of Chinese Dynasties is only a cultural vague concept in the order of "world outlook", and the "border" of its marginal zone is constantly changing. Although there may be conflicts between China and Vietnam in order to compete for control of a certain place in a certain period, there has never been a modern boundary between the two countries. In addition, the border areas between China and Vietnam are both "frontier" areas of the two countries, and the central forces are far behind so that they become the border wasteland of the two countries. The ethnic minorities living here are far from the hinterland of the Central Plains. Their political, economic and cultural development is seldom influenced by the central government. In addition, the national situation is complex. The central dynasty did not treat and govern the ethnic minorities in the way of the rule and etiquette of the mainland, but indirectly governed with the Tusi system in these areas. The ruling power of the dynasty in the border areas was very weak, and the control of the chieftain was very limited, so that some chiefs took dual loyalty to the feudal dynasties of China and Vietnam, and implemented the policy of paying tribute to their fellow practitioners without any violations in order to maintain their dominant power in their own territory. In this case, the border people living in the border areas interact and depend on each other closely in the same geographical space, but are alienated from the relationship with the states only with the ownership of the "native" areas and the loyalty of the ethnic group lacking in the recognition of the specific "state".

In a word, the Sino-Vietnamese border has been changing and expanding in traditional society. Border people lack the concept of state and weak relations with the state. The state (mainly the central dynasty) has not effectively brought the borderland from the "marginal" position into the

institutional framework of national integration.

3. Construction of Border People's National Identity in Yunnan Section of China-Vietnam Border in Modern Times

Before the formation of the modern national states, the territory controlled by the state of the Chinese traditional Dynasty was only "frontier" without specific boundary. The "frontier" controlled by the dynasty, the central political authority will affect or only weakly control these marginal areas. There is little contact between the frontier people and the central government, and the recognition of the state only begins in the process of the emergence of the national states.

3.1. Clear Boundaries and Identifying Attribution

After the rise of colonialism by Western powers, the vassal states of China's feudal dynasty in Southeast Asia gradually became the targets of aggression by colonial forces such as Britain and France. Under this situation, the Qing government was forced to start the transformation of modern society, but in the difficult process of constructing its national state, it still adhered to the concept of "nominal without reality" suzerain-vassal relationship, and contended with the concept of state sovereignty of Western colonialists. The result is conceivable. During this period, China and Vietnam still maintained close suzerain-vassal relations, but the border consciousness of the feudal governments of the two countries gradually increased, and began to strengthen the management and defense of the border areas. Border people in the Sino-Vietnamese border areas also united to fight against Western colonialists on the basis of regional identity, which was the case when Liu Yongfu fought against French aggressors in his early years. On the other hand, the reality is that after the Opium War, several wars between China and the Western colonialists failed and China was forced to cede land and pay compensation. At that time, China could no longer shelter its surrounding vassal states. According to the Sino-French Treaty signed in the 11th year of Guangxu reign, the Qing Dynasty was forced to recognize Vietnam as a French colony, and the formal demarcation and demarcation of the border between China and France became the top issues to be solved by both sides. However, under the influence of the traditional concept of suzerain and vassal, the Qing court did not investigate the origin and development of the border status before the formal boundary demarcation, but could only delimit the boundary and establish a monument in the actual control line. In this way, China has buried the danger of losing its land. For example, after the deceased of Vietnam, the French knew the story of Sanmeng outside Jianshui County in Lin'an Prefecture. They enticed with benefits and adjusted Menglai Daotai called Diao to Hanoi to build Mansion called Diao. The French allowed Diao's fellows to spend money. Diao praised a lot about the French people. The French could occupy Menglai and set up posts and telecommunications. The French had Mengshuo and Menglai area covering thousands of miles without any fights and wars in the shortest term. This is the case before the Sino-French demarcation[5]. In this way, the delimitation between China and France has not yet been carried out, and the French have actually occupied the "territory" of Mengshuo and Menglai by some means.

Before the demarcation, many Vietnamese villages along the border were assigned to China because Vietnamese people feared the rule of the French and had the experience of common resistance to France. Some Vietnamese border Democrats changed their clothes to accept the jurisdiction of the Qing government, or spontaneously organized to fight against the control of French colonists. In the 13rd year of Guangxu reign(1887), Sino-French "Special Article on the Resumption of Border Affairs" was signed, and Mengdong Mountain and Mengdong Three Villages (which were located in the disputed area between China and Vietnam during Yongzheng reign) were assigned to French Vietnam. The local border people led by Xiang Congzhou of the Miao Minority

and Pan Shenghuai of Yao Minority annihilated the French exploration officials. They also submitted a written statement to the court to express the strong demand of Mengdong as the land of China and took the initiative to send the taxes collected from all parts of Mengdong to Lin'an Prefecture. At last, the French had to give in as the failure of ruling in the areas[6]. The item called Prosperity in Guangnan Prefecture of Affairs Commission in Collections on South of Yunnan recorded that the people in Sanpeng of Vietnam gathered together to resist France invaders decrees to integrate into China. When the French objected to it, they asked Vietnamese officials to confront it, but Vietnamese officials recognized it. "Now they surveyed with the surveyors and the French inquired with the maps. Ruan Liang said it confirmed to the previous domination so that the doubts were cleaned. The borders are surveyed by the maps without any arguments[7], Old Stories of Southern Chian. The attitude of Vietnamese officials on surveying border is also based on the understanding of the traditional clan-vassal relationship between China and Vietnam. They share the historical memory of the "Chinese", so they prefer the Vietnamese border people to belong to China rather than accept the rule of French colonialists. These actions of Frontier people and boundary officials could not be judged by simple patriotism and treason at that time. In essence, they were a reflection of the weak concept of frontier people. They attached to China more on the basis of a cultural identity, and followed the French colonists more on the basis of interests.

After the demarcation of the border, the border people who have been in a free state are subordinate to different countries because of the demarcation of the "boundary line", and their places of residence become the frontier under the state administration. At this time, the frontier is no longer the traditional "frontier" place, its significance and role in national defense highlights its importance. Therefore, the frontier people have entered the national vision and become an important issue of national decision-making and concern. Since then, the territory on the Yunnan side of the border has become China's territory, and the outer territory of Yunnan has become a foreign country in the sense of "modern".

3.2. The Intervention of State Politics and the Construction of the Concept of Country of Border People

The late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China witnessed a drastic transformation of the political state in modern China. In the early years of the Republic of China, with the establishment of a nation-state and the preliminary delimitation of the border line between China and its neighboring countries, the central and local governments should have strengthened their control over the border areas and abolished the chieftain. However, due to the internal political disputes and national defense security, the Northern Military Government did not thoroughly reform the chieftain of the border areas and still maintained the status quo of the late Qing Dynasty. Border nationals' ownership of the country has not been established immediately because of the demarcation of "national boundaries". The hereditary chieftains in the frontier chieftain zone still enjoyed great independence. The central government's control over the frontier also needs the help and support of the local chieftain. The demarcation of national boundaries has not exerted much influence on the lives of border people, who still live in the order of their original local society. "They are lack of national concept and consciousness. They are easily tempted by the invaders at the border. They could be Chinese nowadays while attach to other countries in another day. Without the concept of nation and country, they are fickle in their minds. It is quite dangerous for the national defense and maintaining the life." [8] The reason is that the frontier people in the border areas at that time had not yet formed a specific concept of state. Once the contradiction between "native" and "invader" was intensified, it would inevitably lead to the turbulence of the frontier and give imperialism the opportunity to swallow up our frontier territory. Moreover, based on the historical tradition, the

chieftain in the border areas of Yunnan Province can all be attracted to China, and their tribes also have the habit of obeying chieftain, which can be used to fix the border.[9]

After 1928, the Nanjing National Government strengthened the management of border areas in order to effectively incorporate border people into the political order of the country and become "nationals" under the construction of Chinese state. Promoting education, cultivating, rectifying traffic and immigrating natives to the frontier were carried out. Since 1929, the National Government and the Yunnan Provincial Government have conducted four large-scale investigations on the frontier chieftain in Yunnan to adjust the frontier adjustment policies: emphasizing the "resemblance" among nationalities, conducting assimilation education to build a "national race"; and defining the division of national boundaries in order to identify "Chinese" and "non-Chinese". The interaction and dependence between the border people of China and Vietnam originally formed in the spatial dimension are described as "we" and "you" by the state, and the "boundary" between the border people on both sides of the border line is constantly solidified, and the differences are also expanding. Objectively speaking, the border integration policy of the National Government is adapted to the needs of the construction of modern Chinese nation-state. It has played a certain role in uniting the border people to resist foreign invasion and arousing their consciousness of their status in the country. However, the formulation of the national government's policy in the southwest frontier areas emphasizes the expression of the state's will and lacks the opportunity to obtain the rights and interests of the frontier people; the implementation of the policy remains in the upper line of political propaganda and cultural enlightenment, divorced from the reality of the frontier people and lack of the effectiveness of implementation. For example, in the twenty-fifth year of the Republic of China (1936), the National Government sent Survey Team to Mengdong to measure land, and levied farmland tax to clarify the tax and subordinate relationship between the natives and the state. But the result is that the Miao and Yao people have fought with weapons for many years and suffered heavy losses on both sides. The descendants of the Xiang clan who had defended the local meritorious countries fled to Vietnam to escape disaster.[6] Even the national government's policy of benefiting the people by carrying out education and bringing people's wisdom in the border areas is distorted because the system design does not fully consider the acceptance ability of the border people. At that time, people saw the strange phenomenon of "reading on behalf of people" in the two special areas of Hekou and Malipo.[10] As for the claim of national rights and interests that the border people require the recognition of the government, it is not possible to get due respect and protection, but is simply regarded as one of the branches of the "nation".

In short, during the years of Republic of China, although the frontier people had become part of the "national" under the state construction, they were subordinated in the national political scene, politically ignored, economically exploited more and more seriously. Social development was slow, and the relationship between the border people and the state was naturally "alienated", as a result they would not actively participate in the construction of maintaining the national institutional order.

3.3. The Formation of Frontier People's Concept of State under the View of National Social Standard

In the 1950s, both China and Vietnam completed the establishment of a nation-state and adopted a series of political measures to bring the border people into the political order of their respective countries. New China has established an institutionalized system of "ethnic identity" and the overall framework of "regional ethnic autonomy" to deal with ethnic relations in Yunnan border areas. It guarantees the specific rights and interests of ethnic minorities in cultural development, resource allocation and even political participation. To a large extent, it effectively integrates the border people along the border within the scope of national sovereignty and territory. At the same time,

through the practice of a series of national symbols, such as specific national boundaries, national flags, school education, leader worship (such as singing leaders, hanging Leaders' portraits), the extensive use of Mandarin Chinese, and even the Levy of food and tax, the construction of the state regime infiltrates the authority of the state into the local social and cultural space of the border people, and strengthens the border people's sense of national identity to China.

Especially after the Democratic reform, the grass-roots society of border ethnic groups has been fully integrated into the homogeneous state administrative system, and the construction of a unified modern national state has been completed. Similarly, the Vietnamese people on the Vietnamese side of the Sino-Vietnamese border have formed their national identity with Vietnam because of the extensive penetration of Vietnamese state power, political, economic and cultural systems. During this period, Sino-Vietnamese relations also experienced a tortuous process from comrades to enemies, and from enemies to friends, which played an important role in shaping and strengthening the national consciousness of the border people of the two countries. During the period of deterioration of Sino-Vietnamese relations, border management was strict and border people were isolated from each other. Border people who had been friendly for generations, would inevitably be involved in border conflicts, pick up guns and go to war, and become "enemies" of their respective motherlands. In this way, the border people of the same ethnic group on both sides of the national boundary, after experiencing the process of building their own different national states, consider themselves to be different nationals and different ethnic groups. The ethnic boundaries between the "Nong people" (Vietnamese name) or "Zhuang people" (Chinese name) of the same ethnic group on both sides of the Sino-Vietnamese border in history are very clear and they have a strong sense of national public opinion; the root causes are different national identity consciousness and participation in the formation of different "national cultures"[11].

In short, due to the division of the border between China and Vietnam in modern times, the long-term contacts between the two countries in the history of border areas were cut off and the cross-border contacts between the two countries were blocked. They were included in the political order of their respective countries with a strong national interest and ideological color, thus becoming nationals under the construction of China and Vietnam.

4. The Power of the State and the Discourse of the Frontier People

Inter-ethnic politics and ethnic issues are important issues in modern national politics. The ideal relationship between the nation and the state should be that the interaction between the state and the nation is sympathetic rather than confrontational in the local public affairs: the ethnic areas need to identify with and implement the goal of the overall reform of the state, but the significance of the local symbols also needs to be reflected in the will of the state rather than free from it.

In 1978, China began to rectify the chaos and implement the policy of reform and opening up. The mainland set off an upsurge of economic construction, and people's living standards have greatly been improved. But at this time, the Sino-Vietnamese border area has experienced a decade-long war. The war not only caused great damage to the production and life of the local border people, but also made Yunnan border areas miss opportunities for development. Even so, our government has issued many policies to benefit the people in the border areas between China and Vietnam, and strengthened the support to the border people, so that the border people can more or less share the results of the reform, and the living standard of the border people is higher than that of Vietnam in a period of time.

After the normalization of Sino-Vietnamese relations in the 1990s, the Sino-Vietnamese border was reopened, and the border people of both sides exchanged, intermarried and exchanged markets resumed in the border areas. Initially, the contrast of living standards between China and Vietnam

will lead to an unavoidable topic: "Our country is really good", and the pride of our border nationals as Chinese nationals with relatively good living conditions arises spontaneously.

After "reform and opening up" in Vietnam, the government began to realize that the issue of border people is related to Vietnam's economic development and social stability. Since the Seventh National Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party, many special policies have been carried out to develop the frontier economy in the border areas. In the frontier areas, the policies have been implemented in a timely manner and achieved remarkable results[12]. Although Vietnamese economic and social development level and comprehensive national strength are far inferior to Chinese, the policy of stabilizing the people and securing the border in the border areas is more extensive and specific than that of our country's support to the border people, involving all aspects of politics, economy, culture and education, and can be implemented to the households and people, which makes the border people really benefit a lot. In 2005, 2008 and 2010, the author made a survey in Laojie, Beihe and other provinces in Northern Vietnam, and really felt the changes of social development in the border areas of Vietnam. However, China's state-led economic construction neglected the opportunities of traditional expression and benefit acquisition of border people. Faced with unprecedented social and economic changes, the border people feel strongly that their interests, traditions and even living space are threatened and lost, but they can not find the way to adapt to it in the original historical traditions. "Naturally, this kind of loss is deepened, and these are all related to the rise of local nationalism.[13] " In 2007, Phoenix Weekly magazine argued that the relative inadequacy of the development of border areas in China and the relatively favorable conditions of neighbouring countries triggered large-scale migration of border people to surrounding countries, which had a certain impact on the stability and security of the southwestern border of China.[14]

In fact, in 2000 the central and local governments began to implement the project of "prospering the frontier and enriching the people" to improve the local people's livelihood. However, due to the particularity and complexity of the problems existing in the border areas, it has not been fully implemented to the households and people. In 2011, the General Office of the State Council issued the Circular of the Action Plan for Promoting Border and Enrich People (2011-2015). A series of measures were taken to implement the project of "Promoting Border and Enrich People"[15]. It can be seen that "the political, economic and cultural development of ethnic groups in border areas greatly affects the decision-making of the state. The state should not only deal with frontier issues from the macro level, but also should provide a lot of practical support for macro decision-making from the meso and micro level [16].

5. Conclusion

With the establishment of the Sino-Vietnamese national state, the frontier people who originally lived in the same region with historical origin belonged to different countries because of the clear demarcation of the national boundaries. The frontier has important significance in modern national defense, and the frontier people have therefore entered the central vision of the country from the "edge". But the frontier people's identification with the state is not "natural". It is always linked with the specific and actual interests of the emotions and it can not be separated from the national context and germinate alone. Even under certain conditions, the frontier people's psychological level of identification will shift from one to another in ethnic identity, regional identity and national identity. It requires the government to consider not only the particularity and specific interests of border areas, but also the acceptance of these modern discourse by border people in the process of formulating border policies and economic construction. At the same time, the frontier people also have the "field" of the country which is respected and developed. They have a stronger sense of national identity and

gradually become the main body of life in the frontier areas and consciously construct frontier forces to maintain stable frontier areas.

Acknowledgment

This paper is subsidized by the project of Ph.D. Graduate Academic for Freshman in 2012. It is also the research of the National Social Science Foundation's Youth Project "Research on Southwest Frontier Development and Social Change in the Contemporary National Crisis (1885-1945)" (No. 12CZS064)

References

- [1] Jim McGegan. *Cultural Populism* [M]. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2001, p.228.
- [2] Yang Xiao. *Identity and International Relations: A Cultural Theory* [D]. Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Doctoral Dissertation 2000:32.
- [3] (Republic of China) Zhao Erxun. *Historical Manuscripts of the Qing Dynasty* [M]. Beijing: Zhonghua Bookstore, Volume527, 1977:14630-14631.
- [4] *Memoir of Qing Dynasty-Memoir of Shizong Emperor* [M]. Beijing: Photocopy edition of Zhonghua Bookstore, Volume65, 1985:6854-6855.
- [5] (Republic of China) Zhao Zhengyue. *Jinhe Regional Situation* [A]. *Research on Yunnan Border Areas* [C]//*Information on Modern and Contemporary Chinese Border Affairs* (3). Hong Kong: Bachi Academy Publishing Co., Ltd., 2010, P1441-1442.
- [6] Shi Maoming. *Cross-border Miao Studies: National and State Borders* [M]. Beijing: Ethnic Publishing House, 2004, P143-146.
- [7] Quoted from Fang Guoyu. *Series of Yunnan Historical Materials (Volume 10)* [M]. Kunming: Yunnan University Press, 2001:6-7.
- [8] Ling Minfu. *The Importance of Building Southwest Frontier* [J]. *Southwest Frontier* (second issue), published by Kunming Southwest Frontier Monthly Press, November, 27th year of Republic of China.
- [9] Ma Yuhua, Qi Yu. *Investigation of Chieftain in Yunnan by the National Government* [J]. *Guizhou Ethnic Studies*, 2004, (4): 176-181.
- [10] (Republic of China) Ye Tong. *Survey on Hekou and Ma Lipo Special Zones* [A]. *Yunnan Border Issues* [C]//*Modern China Border Affairs Data* (3). Hong Kong: Bachi Academy Publishing Co., Ltd., 2010, P1455-1456.
- [11] Liang Maochun and Chen Wen. *Cross-border Ethnic Groups in China and Vietnam from the Perspective of Non-traditional Security* [EB/OL]. http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_60f25ed70102dvy5.html, 2012-01-08/2012-09-04.
- [12] Fang Tie. *Comparison of Chinese and Vietnamese Border Policies* [A]. *Research Laboratory of the National People's Commission. References for Ethnic Work in Southern Frontier Research (Internal Data)* [C]. 2009, (22).
- [13] Hobsbaum, Translated by Li Jinmei. *Ethnicity and Nationalism* [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Century Publishing Group (Shanghai People's Publishing House), 2006:167, P167.
- [14] Zhan Yanhui. *Fuzzy Border: 100,000 Yunnan Border People Migrating Overseas* [J]. *Phoenix Weekly*, 2007 (19): 1-6.
- [15] Network of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China. *Circular of the General Office of the State Council on the Issuance of the Action Plan for Developing Border Areas and Enriching the People (2011-2015)* [EB/OL]. 2011-06-13.
- [16] Li Zhengting. *Research on the Relations between Ethnic Groups and State Borders in Yunnan Border Areas during Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties* [D]. Kunming: Yunnan University, 2008, P97-98.