



The Art of Ethnography: A Chinese "Miao Album" (Studies on Ethnic Groups in China)

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The Art of Ethnography is a fully illustrated translation of a "Miao album" -- a Chinese genre originating in the eighteenth century that used prose, poetry, and detailed illustrations to represent minority ethnic groups living in frontier regions under imperial Chinese control. These bound collections of hand-painted illustrations and handwritten text reveal how imperial China viewed culturally "other" frontier populations. They also contain valuable information for anthropologists, geographers, and historians, and are coveted by art collectors for their beautiful imagery. "Miao" in this context refers not just to groups that called themselves Miao (Hmong) or were classified as such by the majority Han culture, but generally to the many minority peoples in China's southwest.

This lovely volume reproduces each of the eighty-two illustrations from the original album and the corresponding Chinese calligraphic text, along with an annotated English translation. Each entry depicts a different ethnic group residing in Guizhou. The album is anonymous and dates from sometime after 1797.

Laura Hostetler's Introduction discusses the genesis and evolution of the Miao album genre and the sociopolitical context in which the albums were first made, the ethnographic content of the texts, the composition of the illustrations, and the albums' authorship and production. She situates the albums within the context of early modern imperial expansion internationally by introducing comparative examples of Japanese and Ottoman ethnography. Color illustrations from other Miao albums and comparable works from other cultures give the reader a sense of the chromatic richness of Miao album illustrations and of their place in world ethnography.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Collectively a vital contribution to this emerging field. This Miao album is a tantalizing glimpse of the kinds of rich research that await further analysis." *Journal of World History*

"This book is a unique and valuable source for the fields of history, anthropology and folklore. In addition to its lovely artistic illustrations and descriptive annotations in both languages, the profound analysis of the albums in the introduction by Laura Hostetler gives the book its scholarly significance." *Museum Anthropology*

From the Publisher

"This book is a highly unusual and valuable project, comprising a difficult translation of a rare text. It will be valued among the studies of visual representations that have emerged in postcolonial studies." -- Louisa Schein, Rutgers University

"Qing dynasty 'Miao albums' are of interest to scholars not only for their valuable ethnohistorical information concerning the local peoples of southwest China, but also for the insights they provide into the ambivalent views of these 'barbarians' held by members of the Chinese gentry class, by and for whom the albums were produced. The album presented here is a fine example of the genre, its detailed illustrations and balanced calligraphy revealing the reason why the albums have been so cherished by collectors." -- From the Preface by Charles McKhann, Whitman College

About the Author

David Deal (1939-2001) was professor of history at Whitman College. **Laura Hostetler** is associate professor of history at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

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