

The evolving roles of the Chinese in Laos

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The Chinese population in Laos has long had a major impact on the nation's economy. This thesis explores the role that the Chinese play on contemporary Laotian society, specifically during the reform after the isolation from its former communism. The studies were done in hopes of capturing the regional characteristics and background of the contemporary Chinese society in Laos, and objectively analyzing the constants and variables within the society throughout time and political reforms. In order to clearly demonstrate the evolution of the Chinese migrants in Laos and their decision-making, the author described in detail many life stories of Chinese migrants, including their relative social status in both China and Laos. The author analyzed in combination the personal traits (social status, education level) and community traits (socioeconomic development, geographical accessibility, migration ties) of the migrants, and concluded the key push factor of migration decision-making is the "current stage of the migrant's life", followed by environmental factors like national policies, globalization, kinship and township. As to the pull factor, although there are Chinese enclaves in Laos, migrants still need more support from communities to minimize the difficulties in transitioning. Under the frameworks of global development and history, the author combines macroscopic and microscopic observations, comparatively analyzes the differences between the Chinese communities in Laos and migrants from other times and in other regions, and eventually hopes to predict the flow of future Chinese migrants in Laos. Lastly, due to the rise of China in recent decades, the Chinese in Laos, both the older generation diaspora and the more transnational newer migrants, have reached new heights in

Laos in terms of social status.

Keywords: Laos, transnationalism, diaspora, enclave, Chinese Migrants.