

**Hmong Encounters with the Modern Vietnamese Nation-State:
National and Local Discourse on Family and Health Negotiated**

Taking a gendered and medical anthropological perspective, this work deals with current state-society relations and their implications for the Hmong ethnic group through focusing on a contrast between national and local health and family 'modernities'. It applies a constructionist approach and takes 'modernity' as a representation of the 'real'¹; as a signifying system with discursive characteristics, producing meaning on a particular subject at a specific point of time, while regulating social life.²

This study investigates the liberalisation of the health care sector since 1989 with its specific meaning for the mountainous margins. It explores 'marginal' mass propaganda on health and family which presents the state's new philosophy or, what I would call *the cultured national family project*. It applies an iconography of an advanced cultural mother- and nationhood which puts stress on the Hmong female's sole sphere of social recognition – conception and childbirth. This study shows that Hmong women (in)directly oppose health services in the area of reproductive/maternal care, despite the introduction of a social health insurance scheme in 2003.

This work draws upon data collected during field research in 2006 in Son La Province. Health propaganda has been assembled in 2007 in various North-Western Provinces.

¹ Mitchell, Timothy (ed.), *Questions of Modernity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2000) xii – xiv. In: Houben, Vincent. 2007. *Representations of Modernity in Colonial Indonesia*, (Internal Paper).

² Foucault, Michel. 1972. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London: Tavistock. Foucault, Michel. 1973. *The Birth of the Clinic*, New York: Vintage Books.