

Victimhood within a Climate Crisis in Inner Mongolia, P.R.C. (1957-2019)

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1. Policy Problem

The People's Republic of China's policies to relocate Ewenki Reindeer herders from 1957-2019 were problematic as they

- (1) Falsly classified them as ecological migrants
- (2) Restricted indigenous populations
- (3) Failed to improve ecological conditions in the Inner Mongolia region

Actors

People's Republic of China

- Leaders of the Communist Party affecting environmental policies:
 - Mao Zedong (1949-76)- Cultural Revolution
 - Deng Xiao Ping (1978-92)- 1st wave of resettlement policies in mountainous areas
 - Xi Jinping (2012- present) - "Open up the West" program

Aoluguya Ewenki Reindeer Herders

- Location: Greater Khingan Range, Inner Mongolia
- Total Population: 200
- Details: Lived self-sufficiently for over 300 years
- Advocacy work include:
 - Participation in United Nations Economic and Social Council and the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
 - Protests from educates elites and heads of herder households

2. Competing Claims for Justice

People's Republic of China

Claims	
Environmental Degredation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claims hunters' lifestyle damaged the poplar forest's ecosystem • More aggressive environmental policies would prevent further land degradation
Migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claims to follow World Bank's policy approach of resettlement with development to improve ecosystems by reducing population pressure and land use • Offered social supports as compensation (housing, electricity, welfare payments, and employment)
Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household Responsibility System enacted in 1984 provided herders with dual-ownership of antler industry (herders keep animals, only products like skins, meat and milk would be subject to government collectivization)
Cultural Preservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argued that market-based livelihoods would solve poverty in the region, thus allowing for all residents to live sustainably
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migrants enjoyed an expanded social network in cities and villages • Government invested in local reindeer tourist industry and constructed the "Aoluguya Ethnic Reindeer Resort"

Map of Reindeer Ewenki Migration:
Greater Kingan Range to Qiqian (1957-1959), Qiqian to Old Aoluguya (1965-2003), old Aoluguya to New Aoluguya, Genhe City (2003 - Present)



Source: 1.Xie, Yuanyuan. 2016. Ecological Migrants: The Relocation of China's Ewenki Reindeer Herders. New York: Berghahn Books.

Aoluguya Ewenki Reindeer Herder Advocates

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe sand storms persisted in Northern China in the late 1990s • Decrease in biological diversity since the 1980s • 90% of reindeer transported to new Ao Township went missing or died • Agricultural-style grazing causes greater desertification than the Ewenki's mobile pastoralist lifestyle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migration is forced, not voluntary • All migrants are subject to pressures from local authorities, making life impossible or impractical in the originating location
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household Responsibility System did not grant use-rights to specific taiga pastures and the antler crop remained under full state-control • Government control of hunting economy caused economic dependance on Chinese State
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government reorganized the hunting economy and forced sedentary living in the new settlements • Loss of local knowledge of reindeer herding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Ecological Migration" places blame for environmental damage on minority herders • Migration to cities caused increased ethnic conflict and social marginalization

3. Evidence

4a. False Classification of Ecological Migrants

1. **Ewenki Herders are not primarily responsible for land degradation**
 - a. 1902- Qing Government encouraged Han Chinese to cultivate grassland, setting the course for future over-grazing and over-cultivation
 - b. 1970 - Agricultural reform policies increased water usage and caused greater desertification than the Ewenki's mobile pastoralist lifestyle
2. **Migration did not mitigate environmental dangers to the Ewenki Herders**
 - a. Ewenki traditional "Otor" system where herders traditionally move place to place in taigas (reindeer encampments) in order to prevent over grazing land and to move away from where any risks are present
 - b. 1984 "Household Responsibility System" did not grant use-rights to taiga pastures and 90% of reindeer transported to new Ao Township (2003) went missing or died

4b. Involuntary Migration and Restrictions on Indigenous Population

1. **Displaced pastoralists from traditional ways of herding**
 - a. 1980 - Livestock and Rangeland Double Contract Responsibility System privatized grassland for the first time and regulated use of the landscape they reside in and placed limits on antlers that may be sold
2. **PRC enacted policies that rendered life in pre-settlement villages impractical**
 - a. Only offering social supports to migrants (housing, welfare, electricity)

4c. Growing Environmental Degredation

1. **Unprotected Areas and Natural Reserves**
 - 2000 - PRC's "Open up the West" program allows mining companies to operate in Inner Mongolia
2. **Negative impacts to the environment and ecosystem**
 - a. Severe sand storms persisted in Northern China in the late 1990s
 - b. Decrease in biological diversity since the 1980s

4. Research Impacts on Ecological Migration

The research aims to "sustain" and "advance" society during the current climate crisis. It reveals two competing claims for justice: the preservation of forest land in Inner Mongolia and the legal rights of indigenous communities. Furthermore, it advances research on the failure of ecological foreign-policy by identifying a clear policy problem in the classification of ecological migrants and by challenging future researchers to further investigate the unintended consequences of international pressure on climate issues.