

Hmong and Hmong- Americans

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History of Hmong

- The term “Hmong” does not appear in recorded Chinese history. The main term we find in Chinese history that refers to ancestors of the Hmong is “Miao.” In Southeast Asia, Hmong is being called Miao due to its history with the Maio in China. In the Lao (Laos) and Thai (Thailand) languages the term cat pronounced like Maio. Thus Lao and Thai people tease them by calling them Maio. It is a very **negative and derogatory** term.
- “Miao” today is an official category referencing to Miao ethnic minority groups living in China.
- The Hmong have a **rich heritage reaching back over five thousand years**, but little is recorded about their ancient or modern history.



History of Hmong

➤ **Hmong first mythical King Chih Yu (Jiang Yang)**

- It is believed by western scholars that Hmong were direct descendants of the Miao King, Chi You (Chih Yu). No data or proof has been confirmed.

➤ **Hmong Histories in Chinese Dynasties**

- For nearly 5,000 years, Hmong have lived in the shadows of imperial China and detested Chinese oppression.
- Hmong continually had feud with the Chinese from generation to generation in never-ending battle due to oppression, prejudice, and racism.

History of Hmong

- Poverty and the authorities' suppression of Christianity have recently forced many families to migrate from northern Vietnam to the south and illegally to Laos.
- **The Hmong had migrated into Laos early in the 19th century to seek peace, freedom and prosperity.**
- Allied with the United States
 - Vang Pao and a handful of Hmong elders help the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) combat the spread of communism.

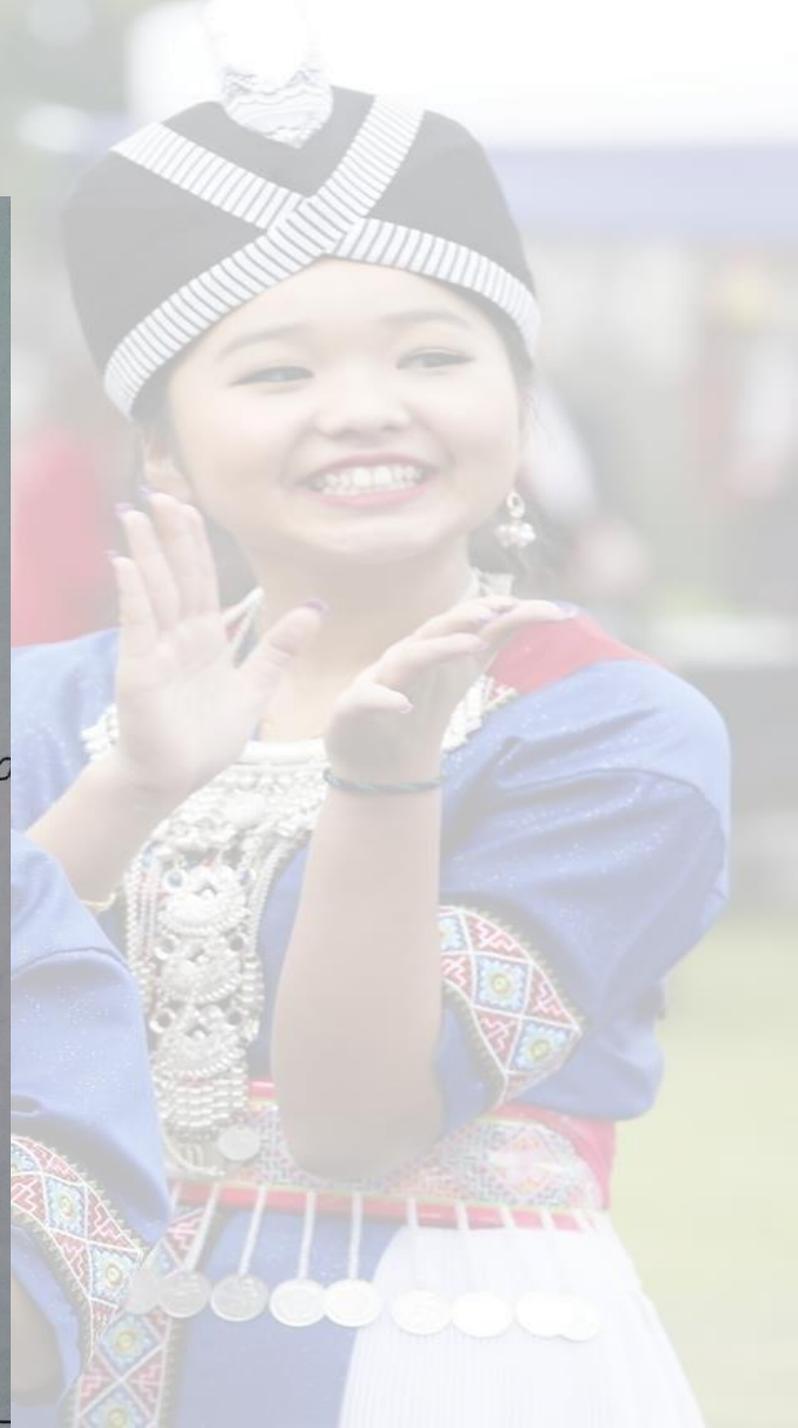
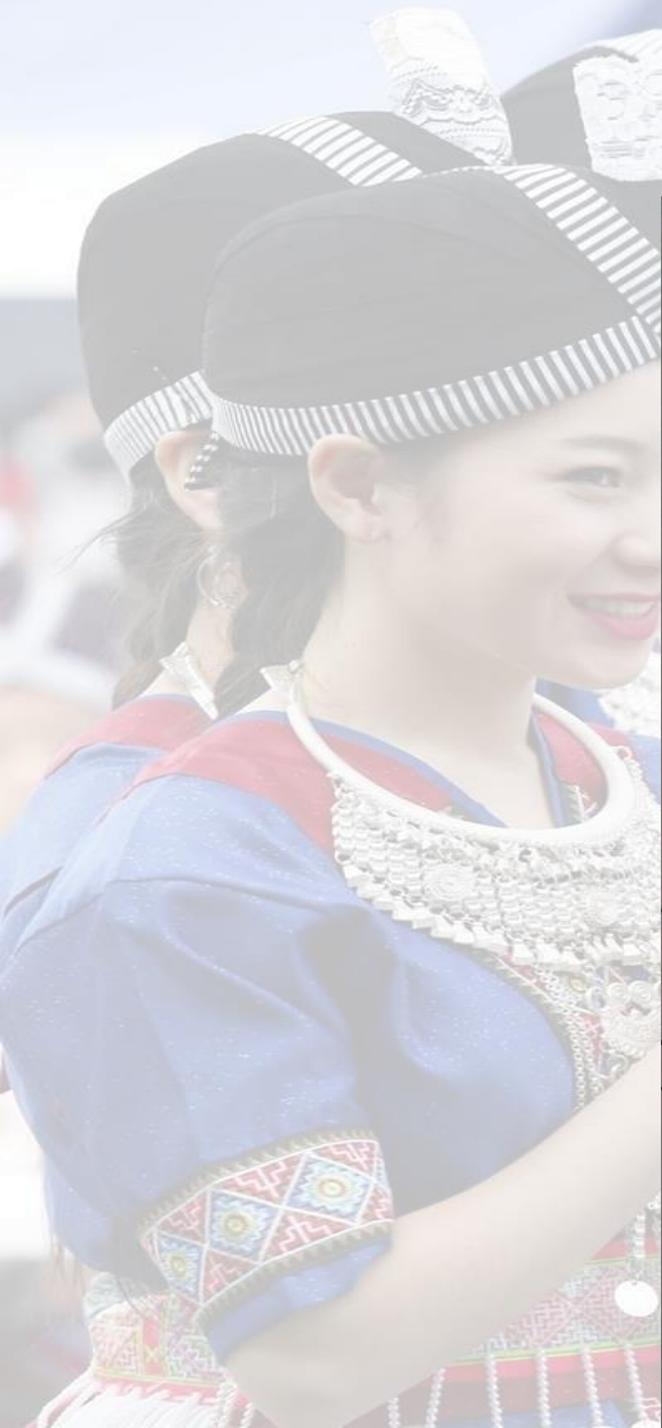
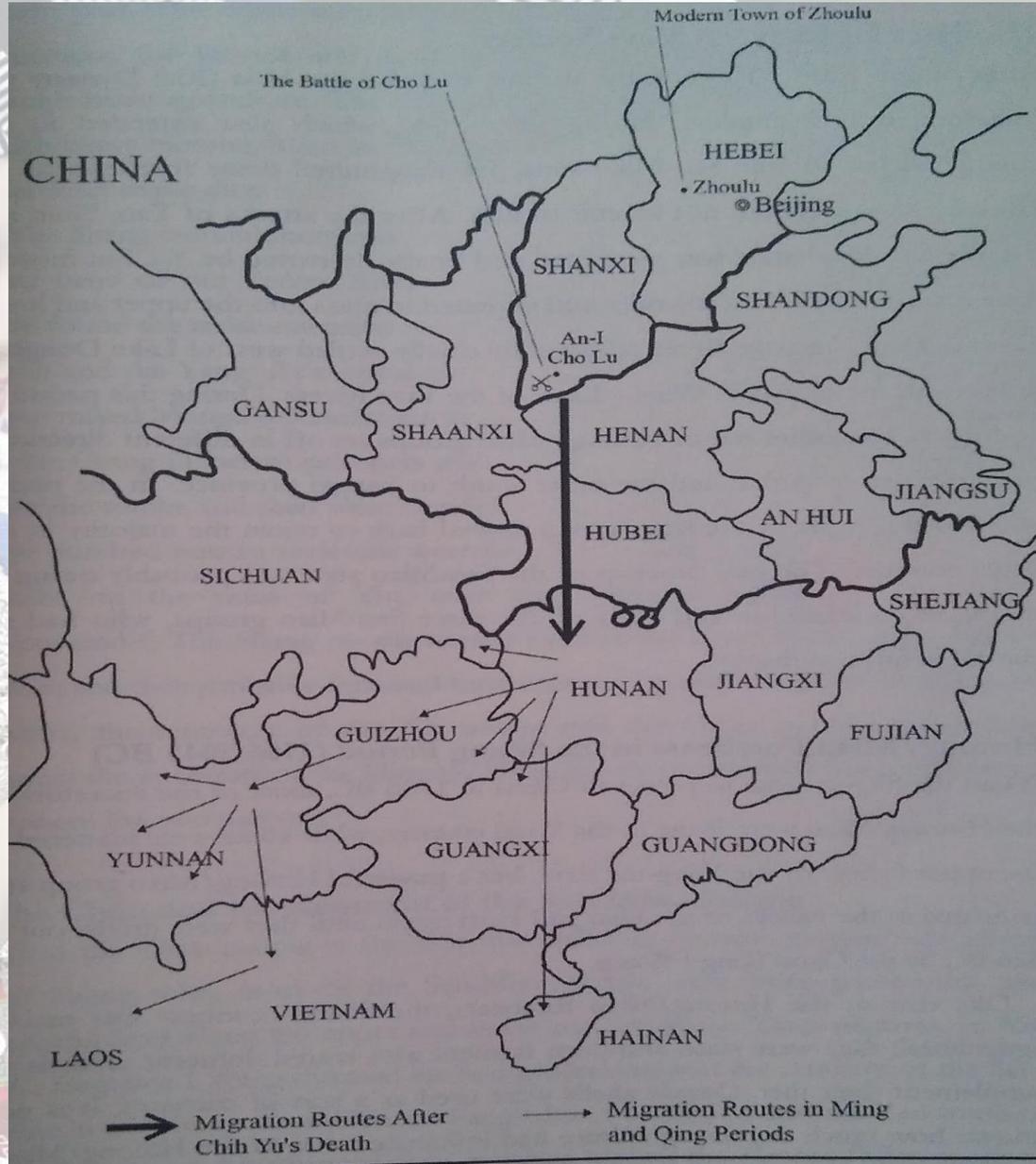


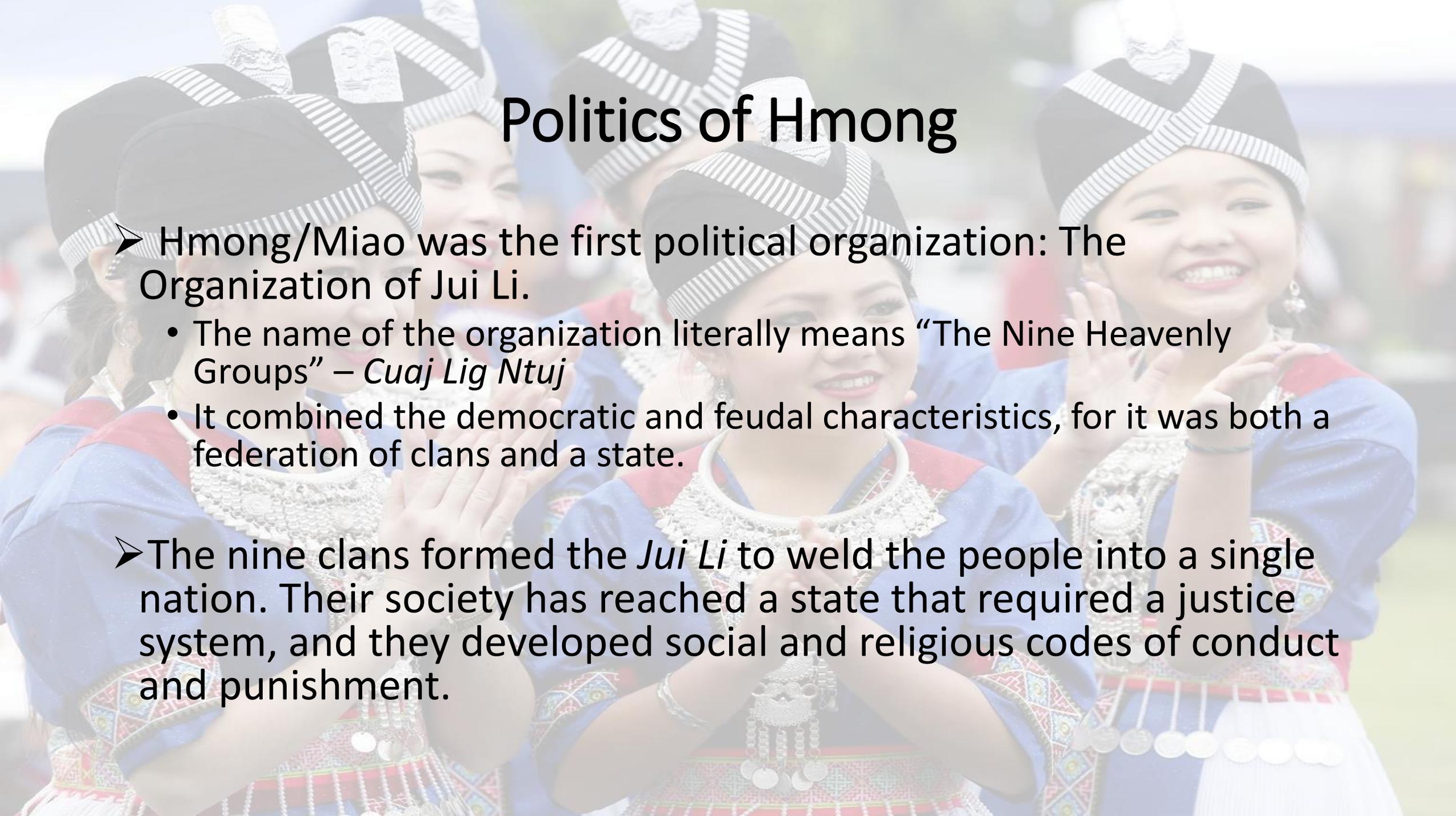
History of Hmong

➤ **General Vang Pao's followers and sympathizers became target of retaliation.**

- Thailand accommodated hundreds of thousands of refugees. From the refugee camps, Hmong dispersed into the western worlds – mainly to France and the United States of America.
- Currently today the Hmong have 18 clans total.

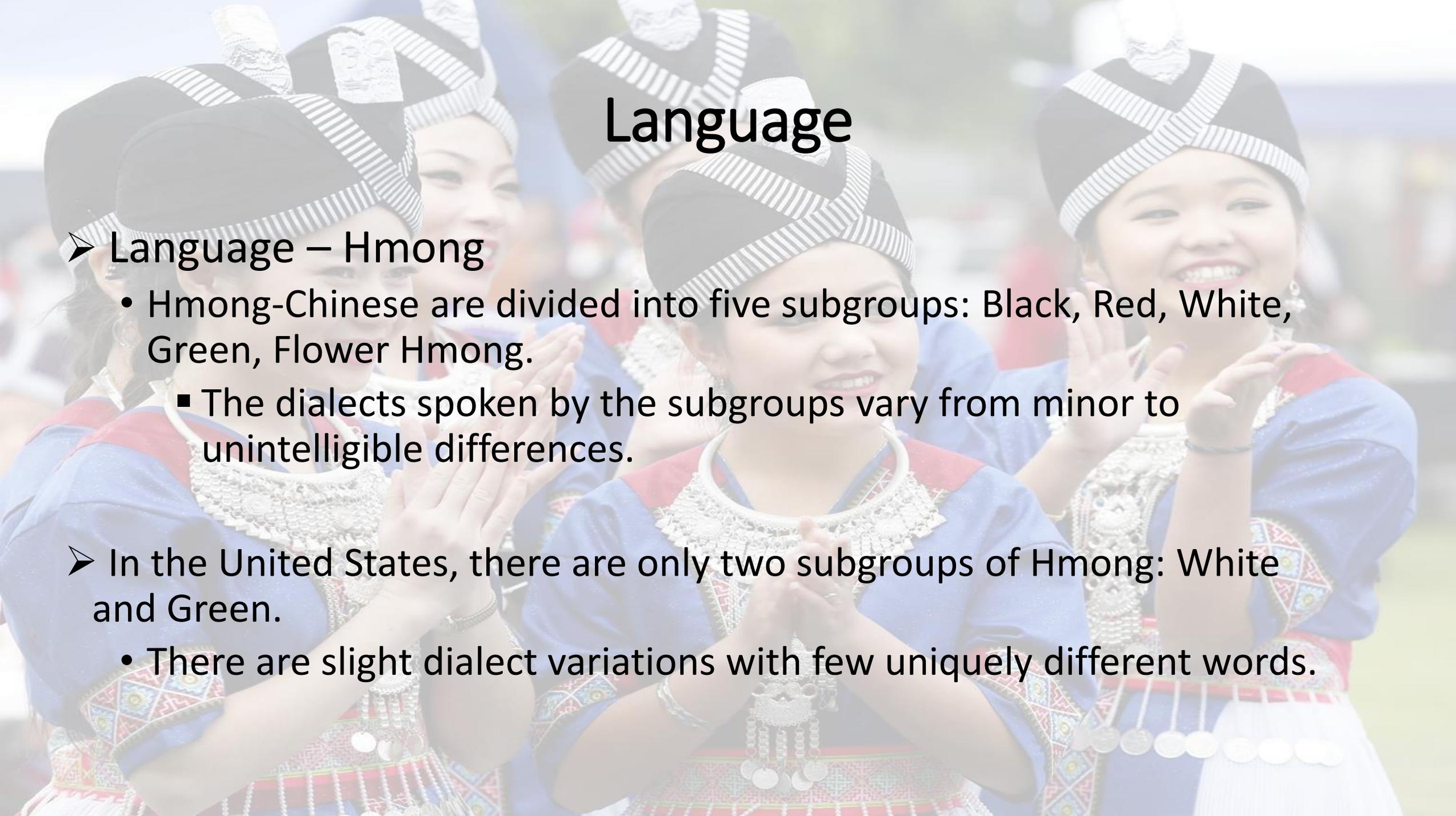
Geography of Hmong





Politics of Hmong

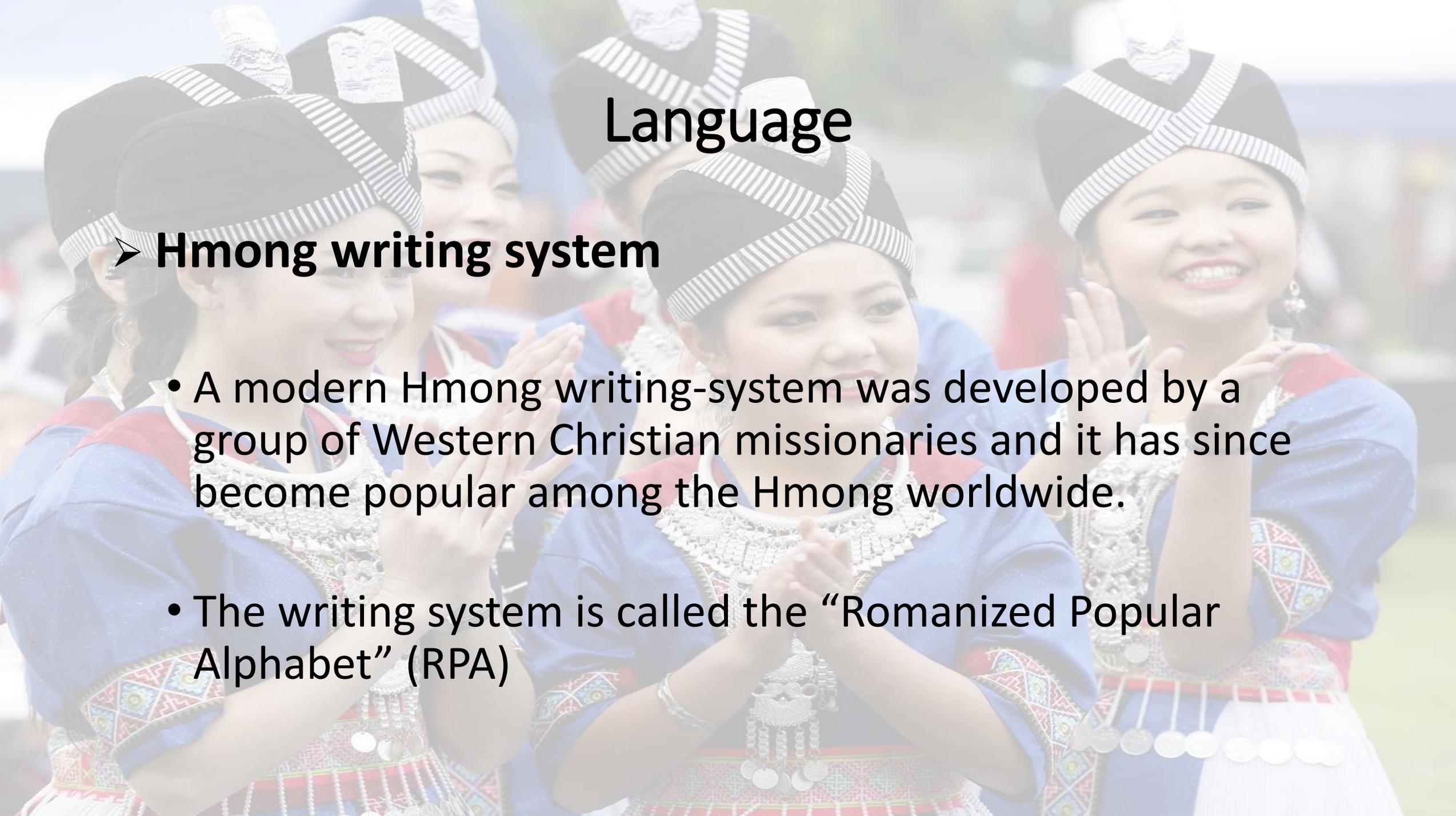
- Hmong/Miao was the first political organization: The Organization of Jui Li.
 - The name of the organization literally means “The Nine Heavenly Groups” – *Cuaj Lig Ntuj*
 - It combined the democratic and feudal characteristics, for it was both a federation of clans and a state.
- The nine clans formed the *Jui Li* to weld the people into a single nation. Their society has reached a state that required a justice system, and they developed social and religious codes of conduct and punishment.



Language

➤ Language – Hmong

- Hmong-Chinese are divided into five subgroups: Black, Red, White, Green, Flower Hmong.
 - The dialects spoken by the subgroups vary from minor to unintelligible differences.
- In the United States, there are only two subgroups of Hmong: White and Green.
 - There are slight dialect variations with few uniquely different words.



Language

➤ **Hmong writing system**

- A modern Hmong writing-system was developed by a group of Western Christian missionaries and it has since become popular among the Hmong worldwide.
- The writing system is called the “Romanized Popular Alphabet” (RPA)



Greetings, Displays of Respect and General Etiquette

❖ *These are traditional values and practices. Some of them are out dated since many have assimilated into the mainstream American culture. No studies have been conducted currently of what traditional values are lost and retained.*

➤ **Fathers who have sons obtain respect**

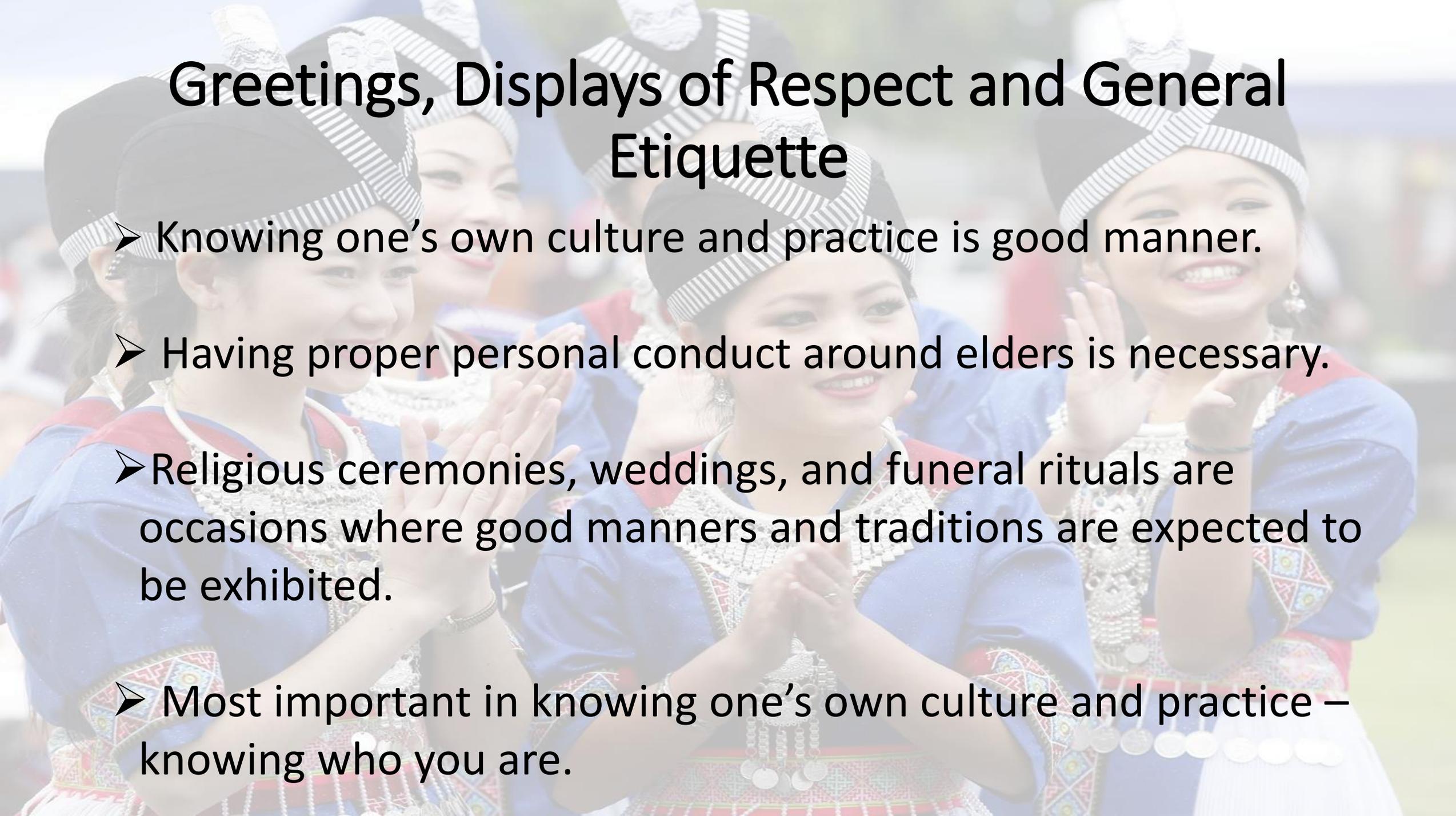
- It is crucial for a family to have a son as it is to have a father in a family.



Greetings, Displays of Respect and General Etiquette

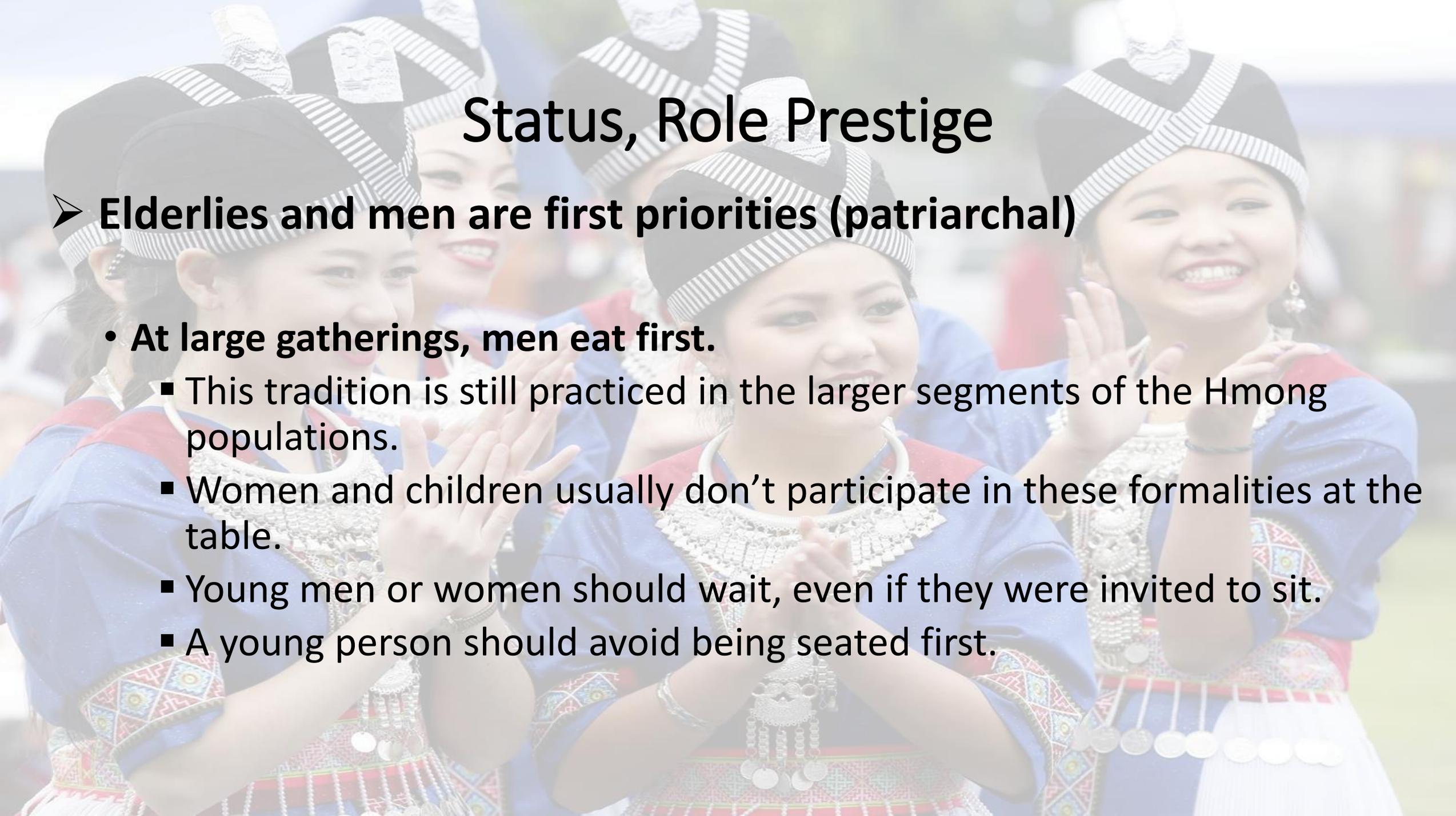
➤ Talking back to elders is disrespectful

- Hmong children are discouraged from talking back to their parents.
 - They are also taught to not question their parents' authority and actions.
 - Children are not even to look at their elders when being talked to. Looking at an elder when he is talking is a sign of disrespect.
 - Questioning their parents' authority is not culturally acceptable.



Greetings, Displays of Respect and General Etiquette

- Knowing one's own culture and practice is good manner.
- Having proper personal conduct around elders is necessary.
- Religious ceremonies, weddings, and funeral rituals are occasions where good manners and traditions are expected to be exhibited.
- Most important in knowing one's own culture and practice – knowing who you are.



Status, Role Prestige

➤ **Elderlies and men are first priorities (patriarchal)**

- **At large gatherings, men eat first.**
 - This tradition is still practiced in the larger segments of the Hmong populations.
 - Women and children usually don't participate in these formalities at the table.
 - Young men or women should wait, even if they were invited to sit.
 - A young person should avoid being seated first.

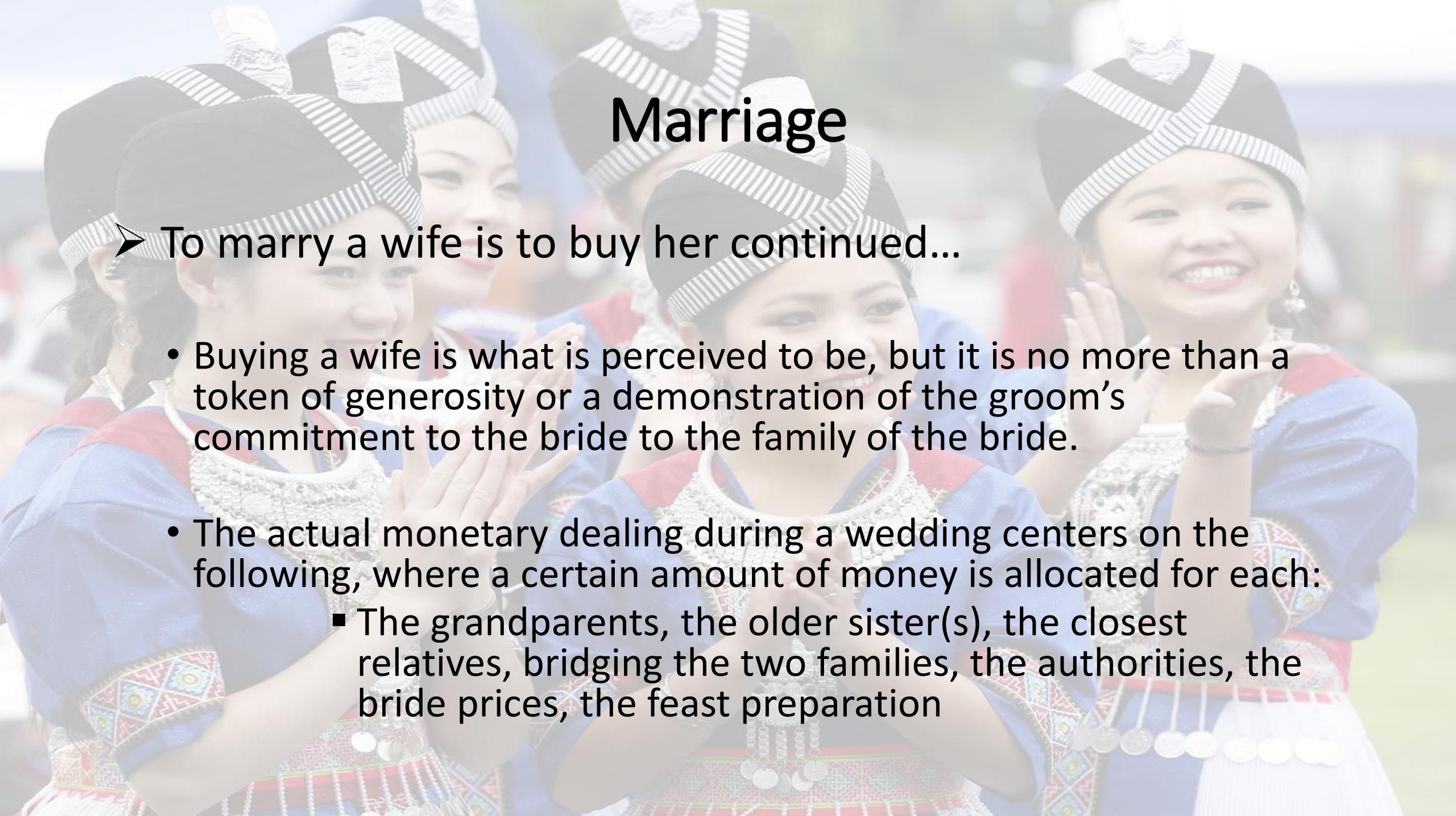
Marriage

➤ **History of Hmong Traditional Wedding Founders**

- Hmong wedding traditions are believed to have taken root with the two sons of the siblings who survived the great flood which cleansed humanity.
- A wedding, following tradition means following the footsteps of Lialue and Trumee.

➤ **To marry a wife is to buy her**

- **The actual terminology for a man to get married is literally “buy wife.”**



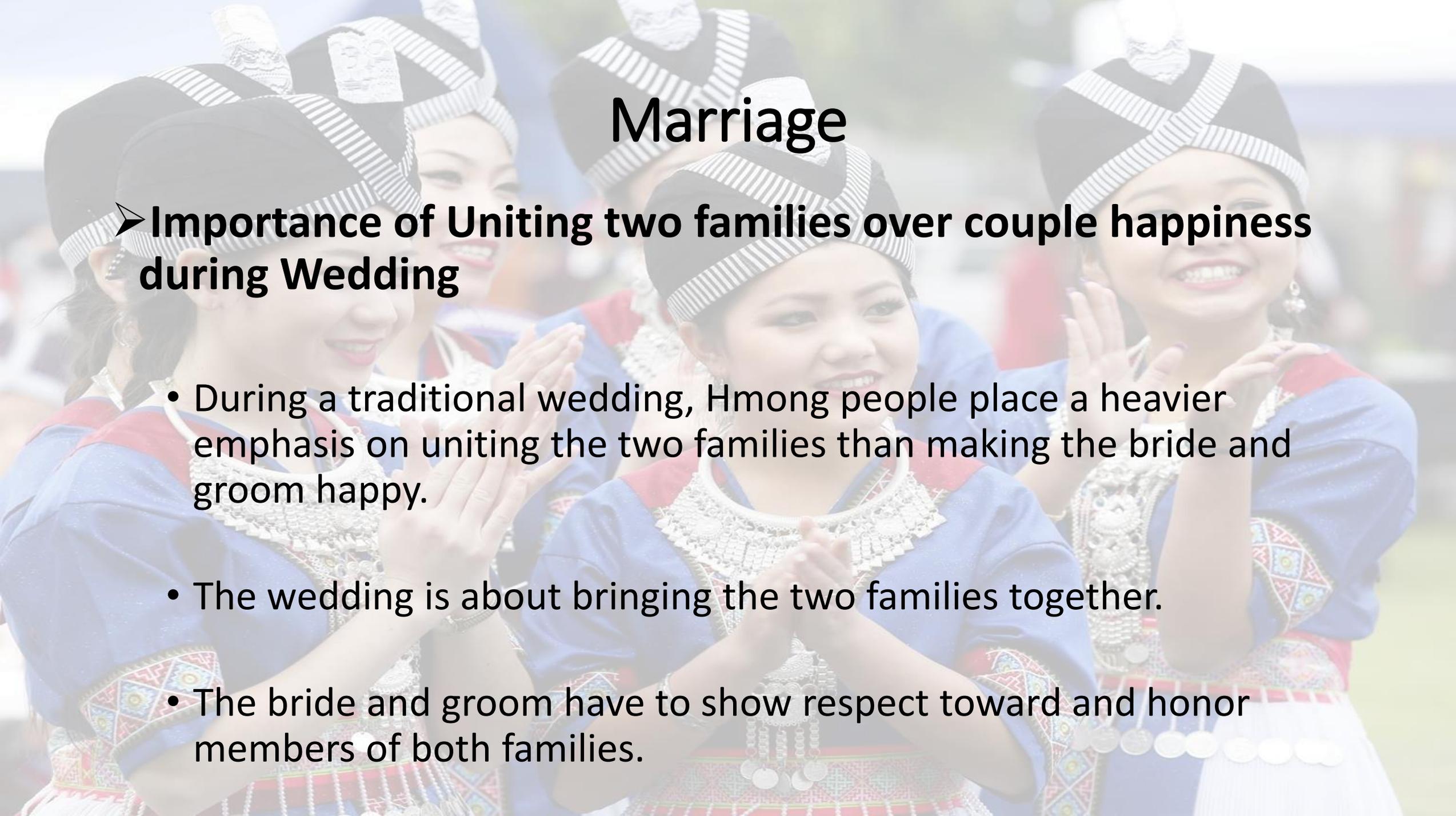
Marriage

➤ To marry a wife is to buy her continued...

- Buying a wife is what is perceived to be, but it is no more than a token of generosity or a demonstration of the groom's commitment to the bride to the family of the bride.
- The actual monetary dealing during a wedding centers on the following, where a certain amount of money is allocated for each:
 - The grandparents, the older sister(s), the closest relatives, bridging the two families, the authorities, the bride prices, the feast preparation

Marriage

- To marry a wife is to buy her continued...
 - Four maykong (chosen elderlies to negotiate the other party elderlies about price of bride and setups of wedding) are going to go between the two families negotiating all these prices without the families having to come face-to-face.
 - The biggest part of the deal is the bride price, which varies significantly from one part of the world to another.
 - In the United States, it can range from \$5000 to \$10,000.



Marriage

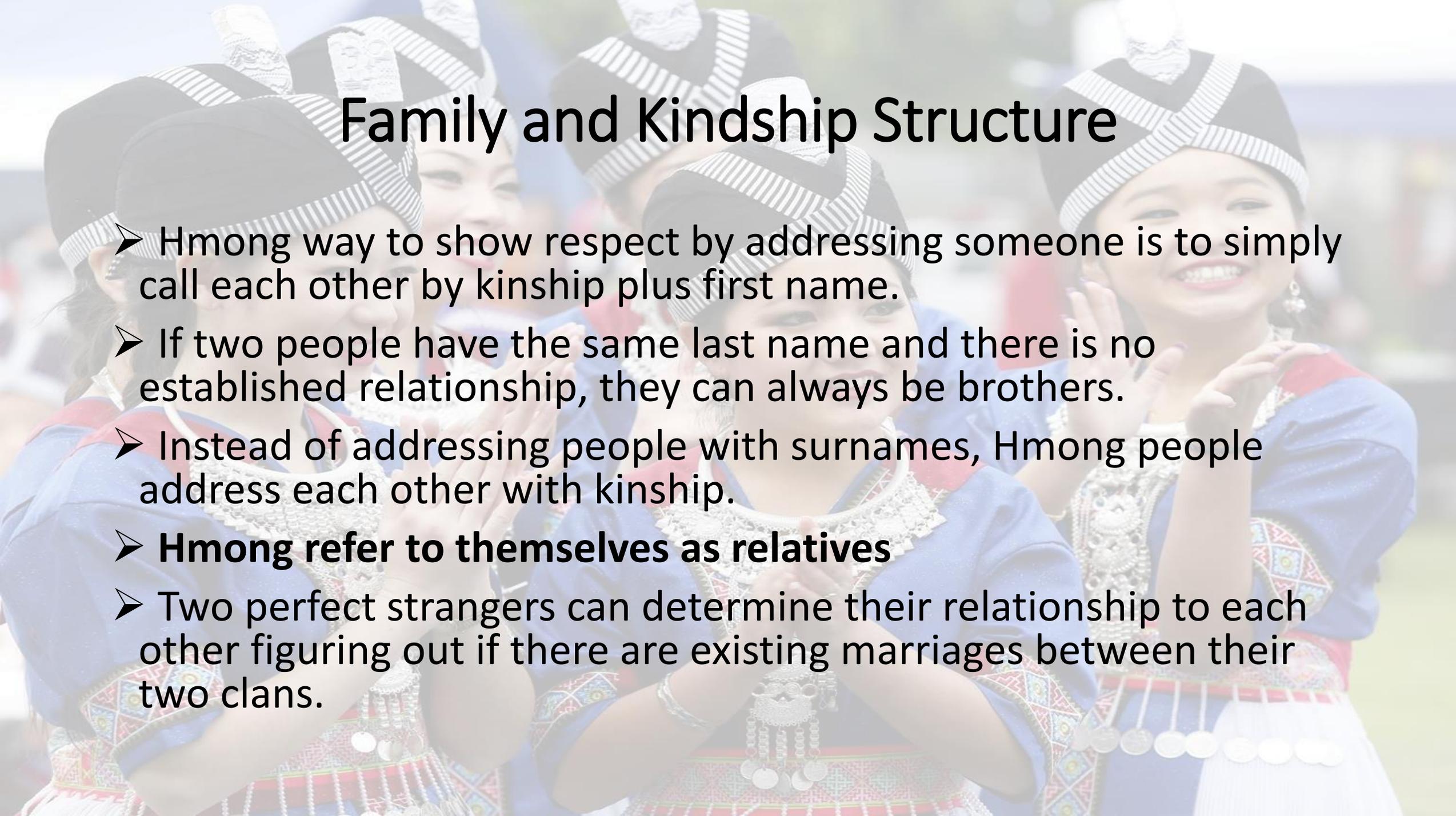
➤ Importance of Uniting two families over couple happiness during Wedding

- During a traditional wedding, Hmong people place a heavier emphasis on uniting the two families than making the bride and groom happy.
- The wedding is about bringing the two families together.
- The bride and groom have to show respect toward and honor members of both families.

Marriage

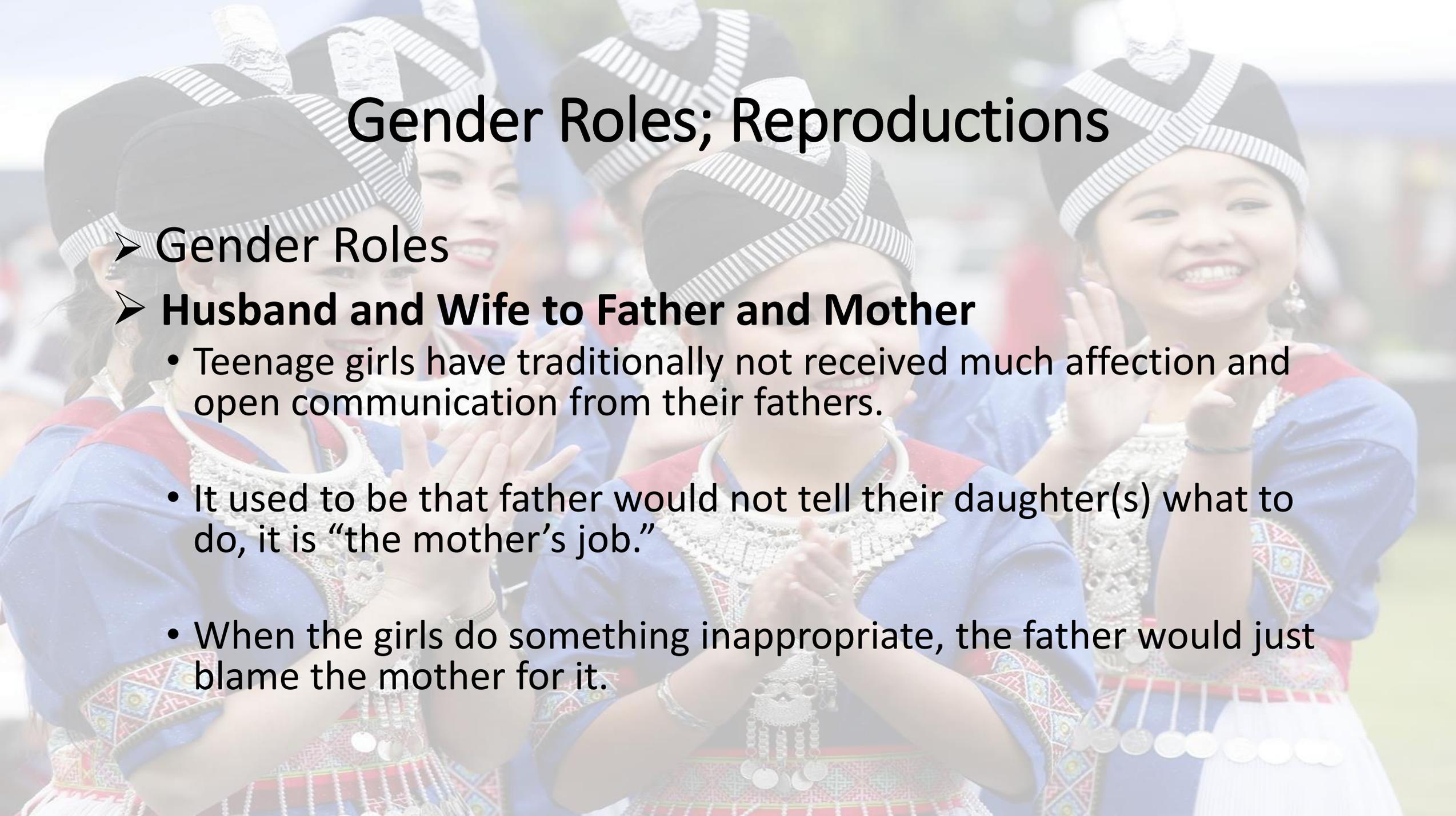
➤ When and Who they can and cannot Marry

- Every Hmong young man has to know what to do when he wants to get married; it is his responsibility to know how to conduct himself.
- A man must consult an elder or will cause his family embarrassment and will pay out more money.
- only one person from the same family can get married during any cycle of the lunar calendar
- two couples should not plan to get married at the same time or on the same night
- People with the same last name should not marry each other since the 1960's
- A man and a woman of different last names



Family and Kindship Structure

- Hmong way to show respect by addressing someone is to simply call each other by kinship plus first name.
- If two people have the same last name and there is no established relationship, they can always be brothers.
- Instead of addressing people with surnames, Hmong people address each other with kinship.
- **Hmong refer to themselves as relatives**
- Two perfect strangers can determine their relationship to each other figuring out if there are existing marriages between their two clans.

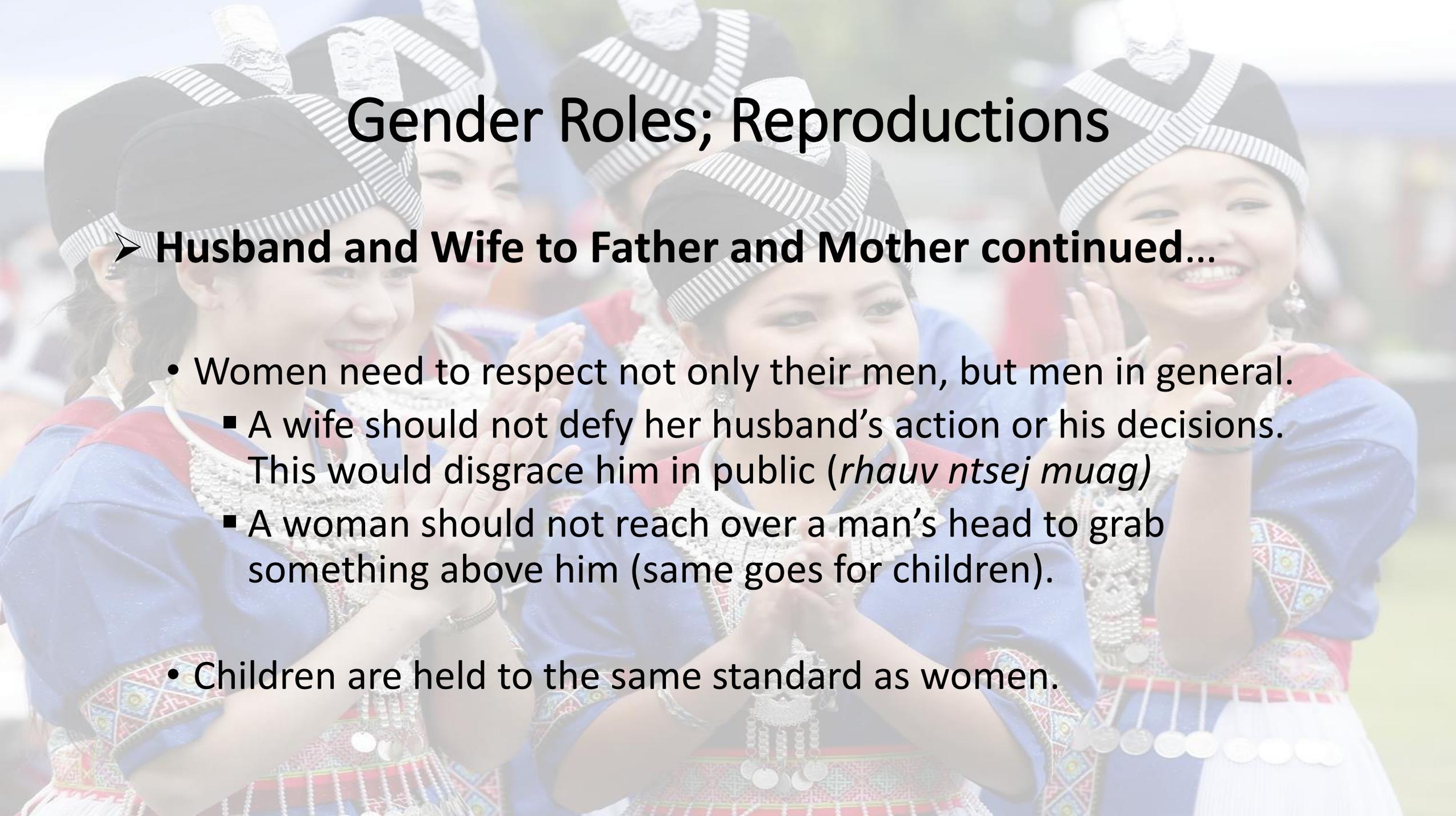


Gender Roles; Reproductions

➤ Gender Roles

➤ **Husband and Wife to Father and Mother**

- Teenage girls have traditionally not received much affection and open communication from their fathers.
- It used to be that father would not tell their daughter(s) what to do, it is “the mother’s job.”
- When the girls do something inappropriate, the father would just blame the mother for it.



Gender Roles; Reproductions

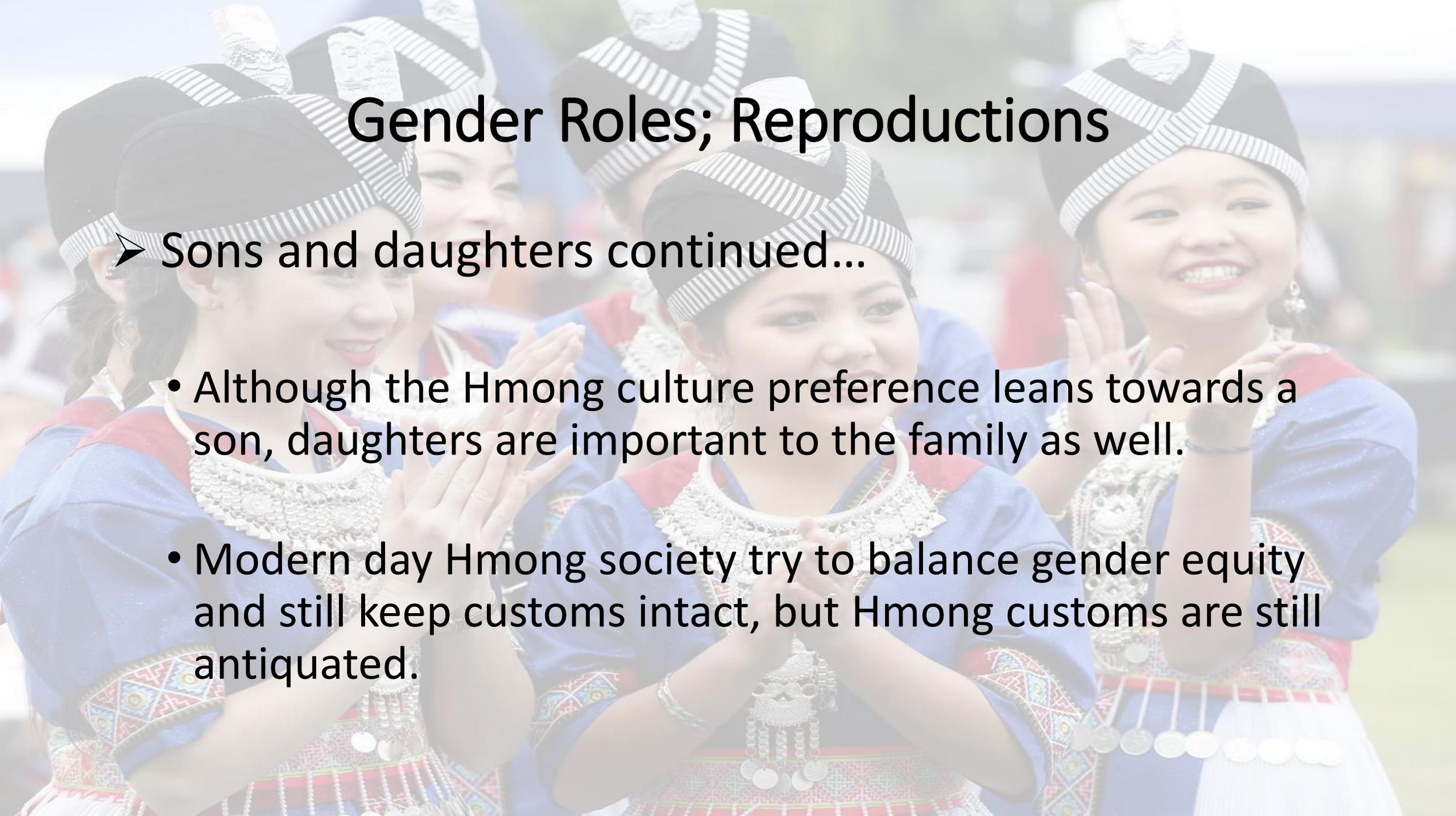
➤ Husband and Wife to Father and Mother continued...

- Women need to respect not only their men, but men in general.
 - A wife should not defy her husband's action or his decisions. This would disgrace him in public (*rhauv ntsej muag*)
 - A woman should not reach over a man's head to grab something above him (same goes for children).
- Children are held to the same standard as women.

Gender Roles; Reproductions

➤ Sons and daughters

- Hmong parents always want at least one son because a daughter will marry into another family and can become an outsider
- A son has the inherit right to the family name and to be the family heir.
- A son is obligated to take care of his parents when they become old.
 - If there is more than one son, the responsibility for the parents lies in the youngest.
- The clannish nature of the Hmong society favors a son.
 - A family that does not have a son is viewed as a burden to the clan.



Gender Roles; Reproductions

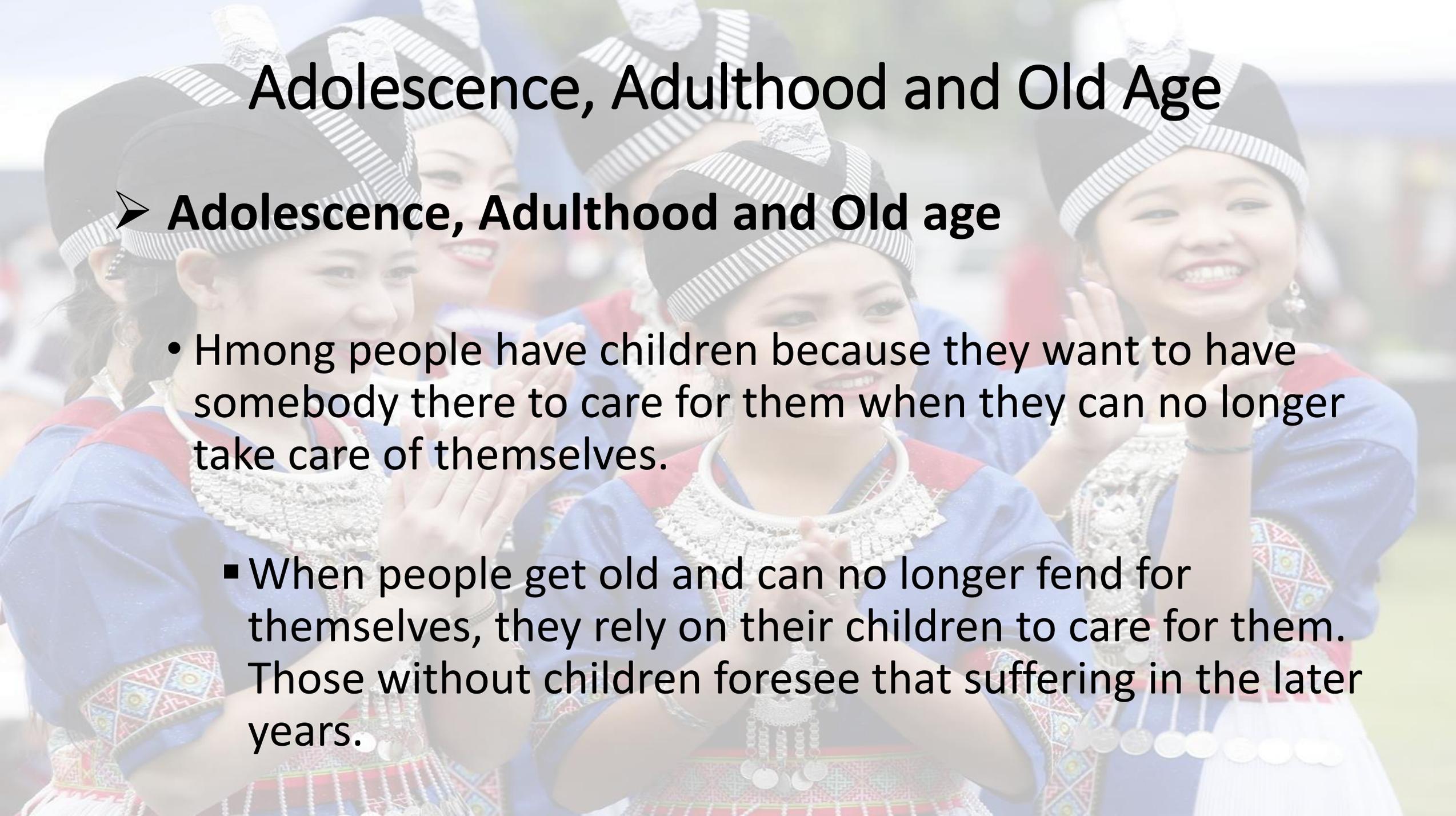
- Sons and daughters continued...
- Although the Hmong culture preference leans towards a son, daughters are important to the family as well.
- Modern day Hmong society try to balance gender equity and still keep customs intact, but Hmong customs are still antiquated.



Childhood and Socialization

➤ Childhood and Socialization

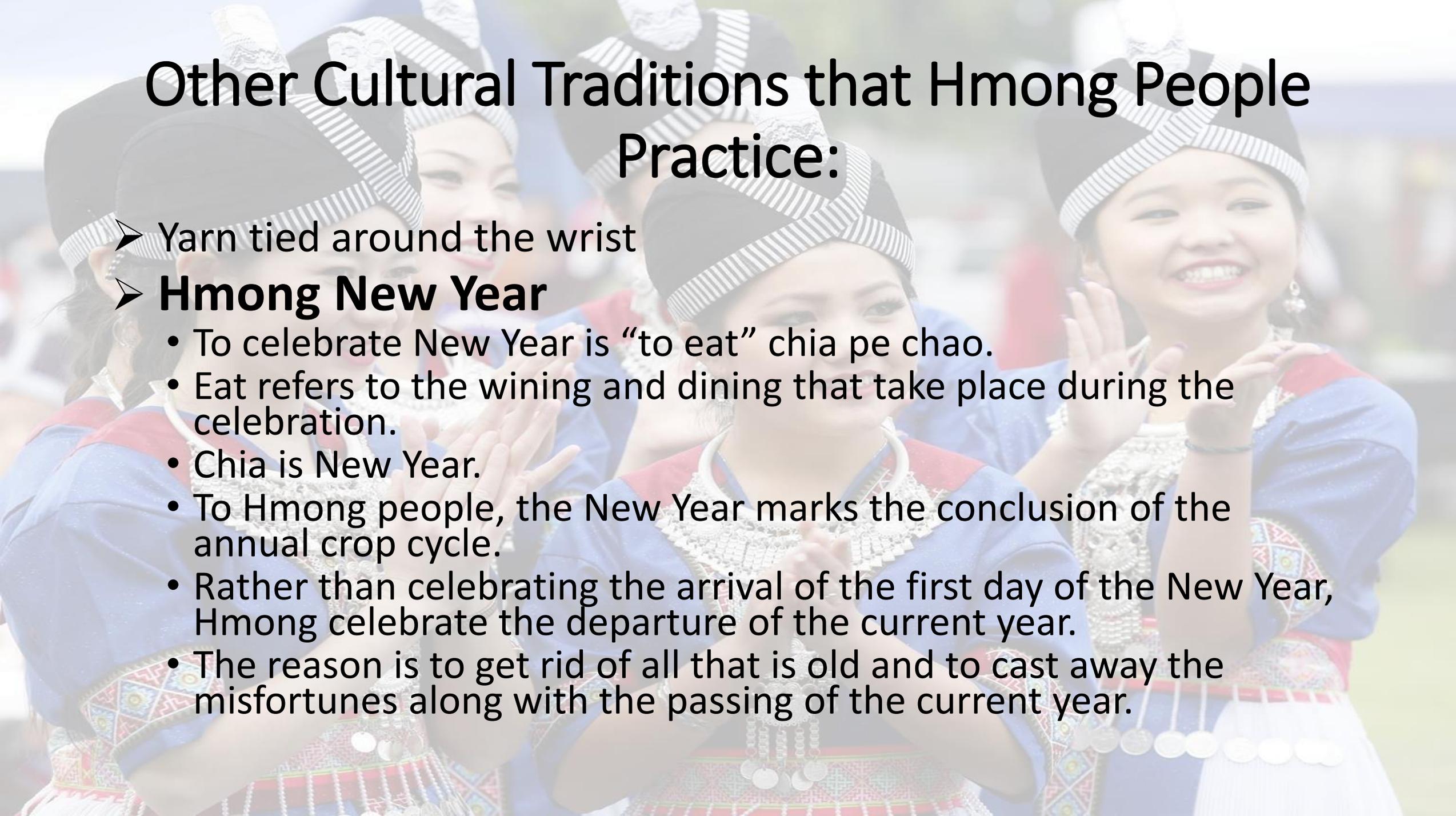
- In traditional Hmong and Lao villages, girls care for younger siblings as early as age 5; by the age 12 they have complete responsibility for younger siblings, in addition to helping with household chores.



Adolescence, Adulthood and Old Age

➤ Adolescence, Adulthood and Old age

- Hmong people have children because they want to have somebody there to care for them when they can no longer take care of themselves.
 - When people get old and can no longer fend for themselves, they rely on their children to care for them. Those without children foresee that suffering in the later years.



Other Cultural Traditions that Hmong People Practice:

➤ Yarn tied around the wrist

➤ **Hmong New Year**

- To celebrate New Year is “to eat” chia pe chao.
- Eat refers to the wining and dining that take place during the celebration.
- Chia is New Year.
- To Hmong people, the New Year marks the conclusion of the annual crop cycle.
- Rather than celebrating the arrival of the first day of the New Year, Hmong celebrate the departure of the current year.
- The reason is to get rid of all that is old and to cast away the misfortunes along with the passing of the current year.



Other Cultural Traditions that Hmong People Practice:

➤ **Hmong New Year Festival**

- An annual social event where the whole community gets involved. It is a time for parents to show off their most prized possessions--not just the children, but also clothes, jewelry, and talent (Cha, 2010, p. 58).

➤ **Socialization Between People**

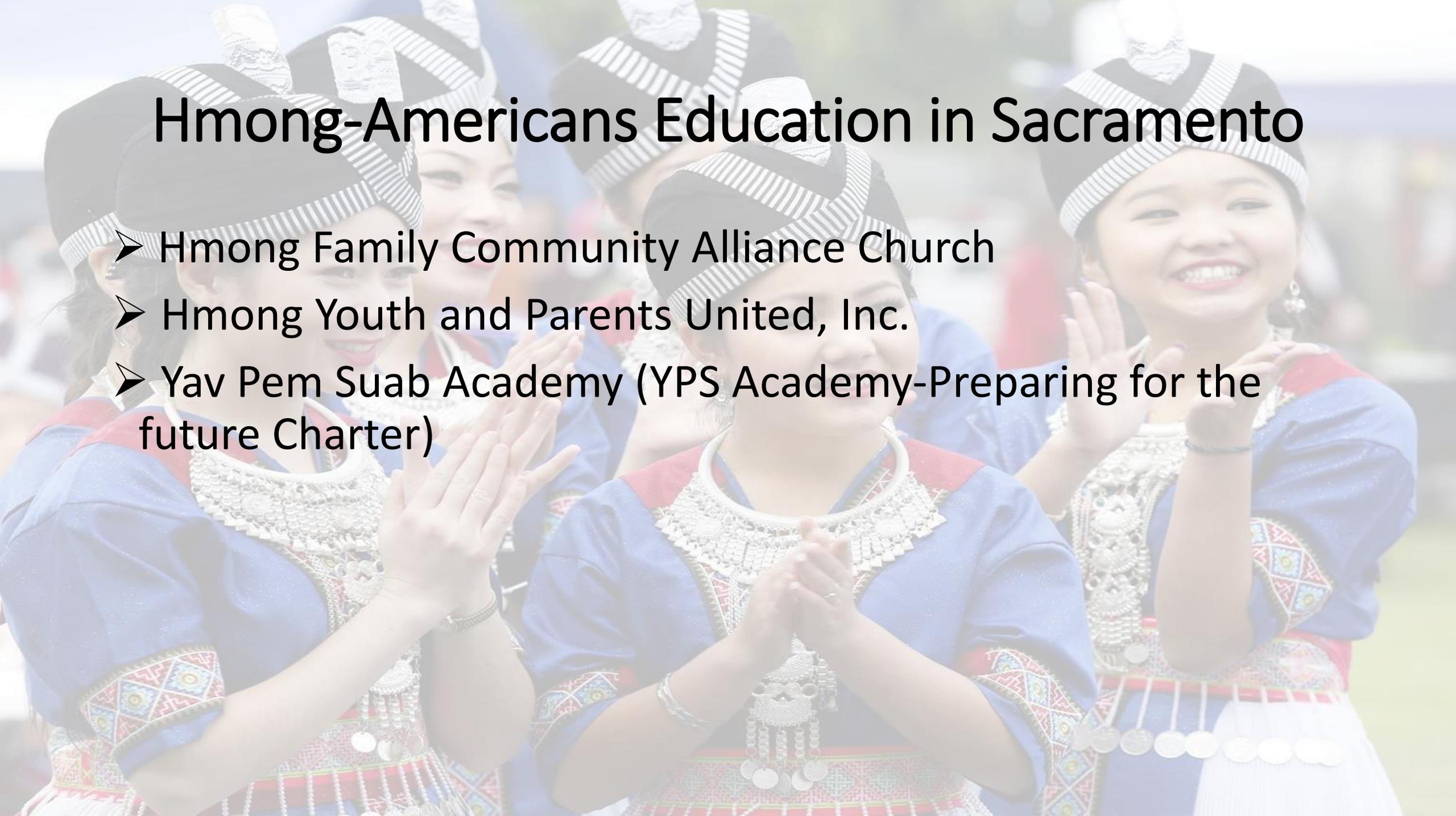
- Leaders of the community designate a central location with a wide-open space for people to gather.
- Single people flock to the New Year celebration compound to seek out a potential wife or husband.
- single men and women toss balls with each other and sing traditional folk songs.
- Parents take this opportunity to scout for brides for their sons and grooms for their daughters

Other Cultural Traditions that Hmong People Practice:

Sacramento Hmong New Year Festival

Old and Young Hmong ball tossing

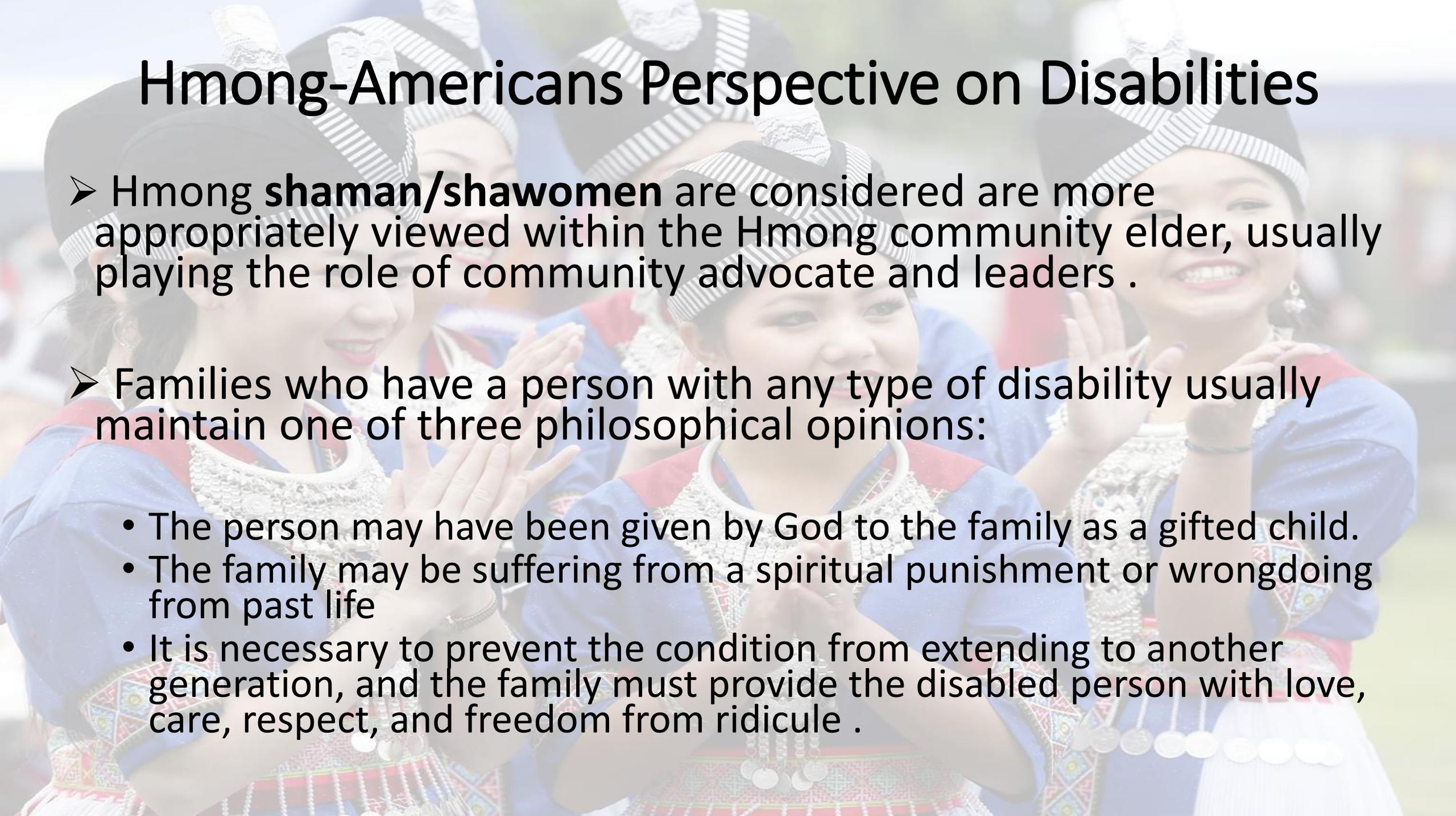


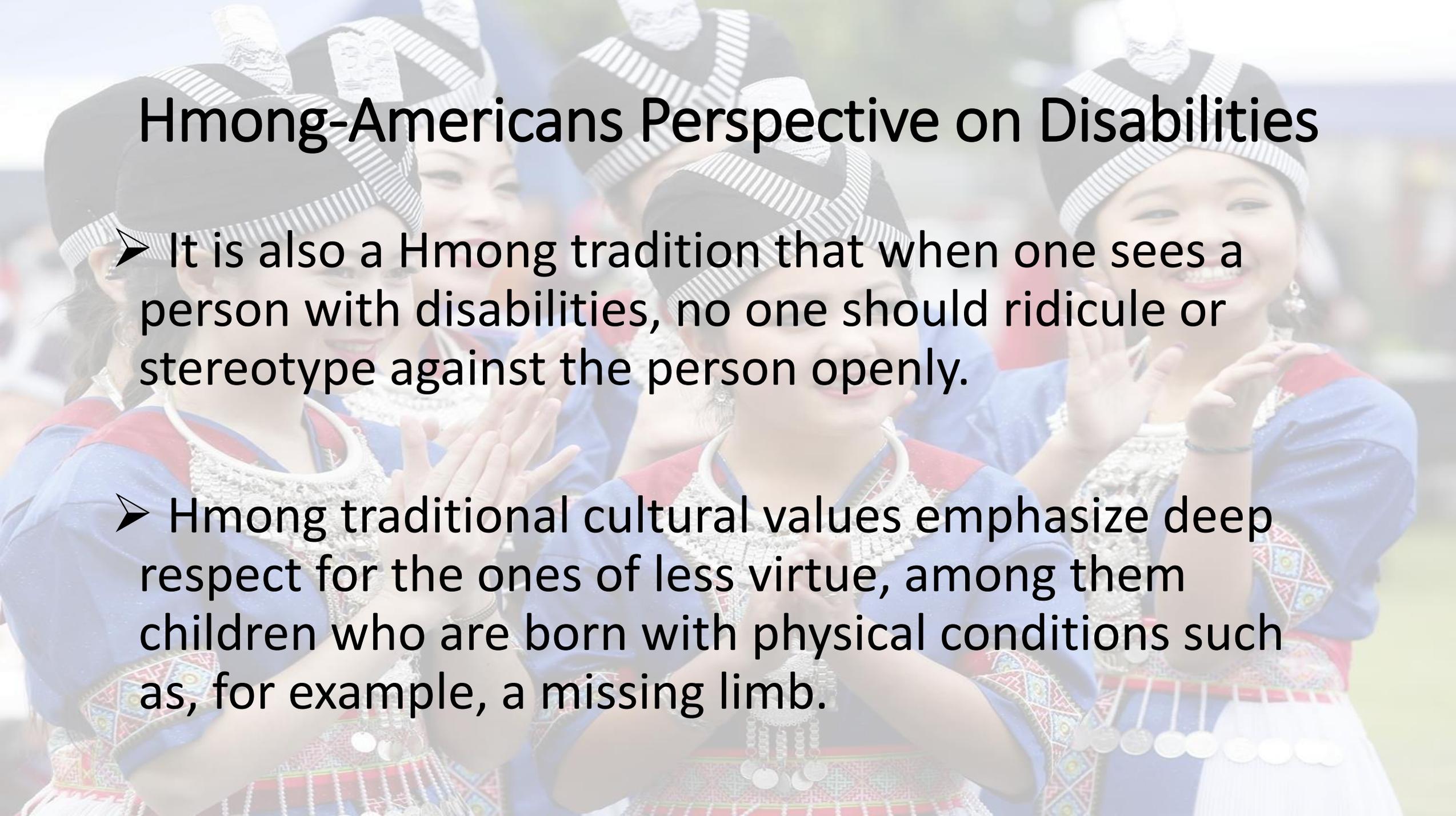


Hmong-Americans Education in Sacramento

- Hmong Family Community Alliance Church
- Hmong Youth and Parents United, Inc.
- Yav Pem Suab Academy (YPS Academy-Preparing for the future Charter)

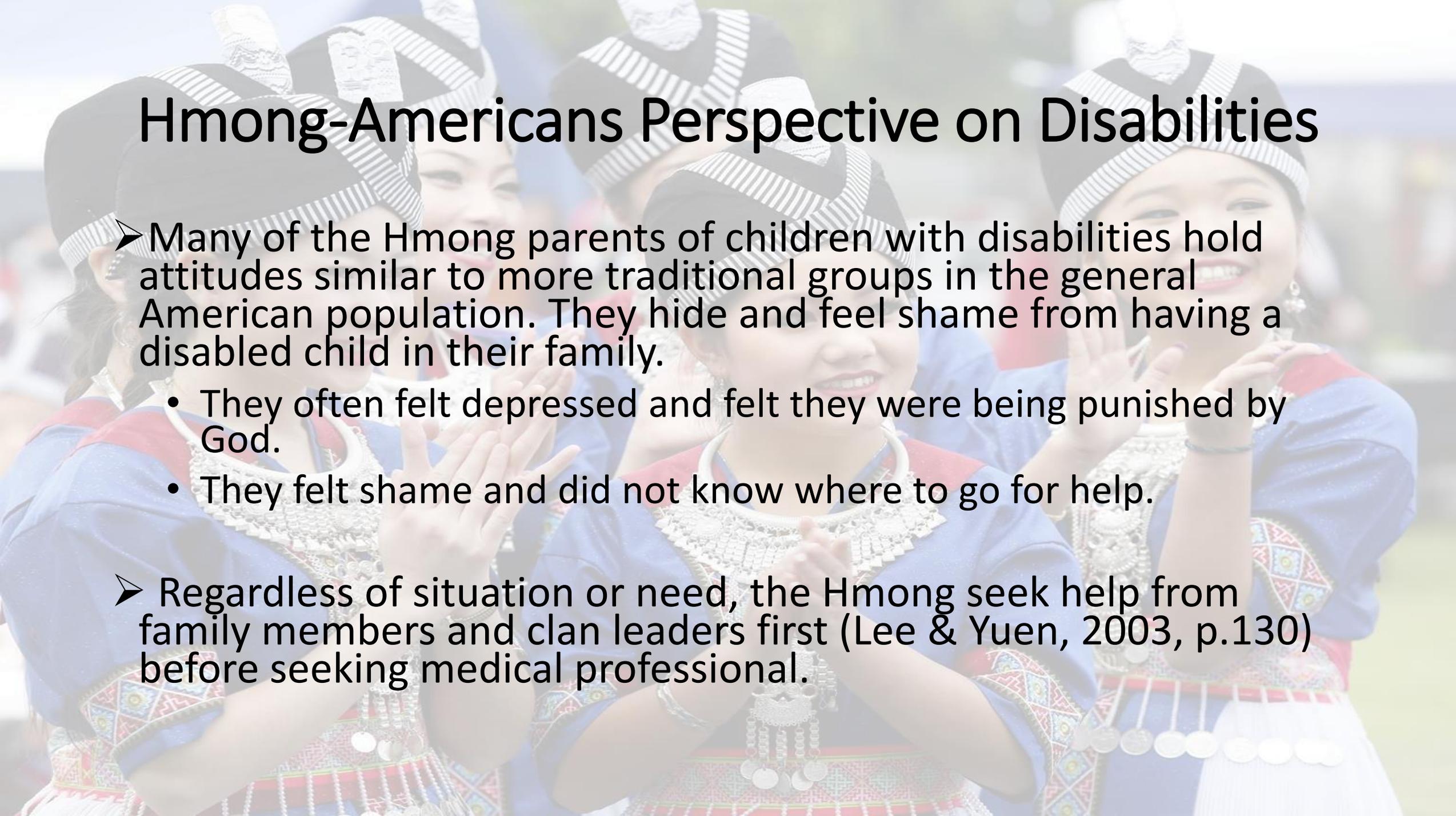
Hmong-Americans Perspective on Disabilities

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- Hmong **shaman/shawomen** are considered are more appropriately viewed within the Hmong community elder, usually playing the role of community advocate and leaders .
 - Families who have a person with any type of disability usually maintain one of three philosophical opinions:
 - The person may have been given by God to the family as a gifted child.
 - The family may be suffering from a spiritual punishment or wrongdoing from past life
 - It is necessary to prevent the condition from extending to another generation, and the family must provide the disabled person with love, care, respect, and freedom from ridicule .

A group of Hmong women in traditional blue and red attire with silver jewelry, clapping and smiling. The image is semi-transparent, serving as a background for the text.

Hmong-Americans Perspective on Disabilities

- It is also a Hmong tradition that when one sees a person with disabilities, no one should ridicule or stereotype against the person openly.
- Hmong traditional cultural values emphasize deep respect for the ones of less virtue, among them children who are born with physical conditions such as, for example, a missing limb.



Hmong-Americans Perspective on Disabilities

- Many of the Hmong parents of children with disabilities hold attitudes similar to more traditional groups in the general American population. They hide and feel shame from having a disabled child in their family.
 - They often felt depressed and felt they were being punished by God.
 - They felt shame and did not know where to go for help.
- Regardless of situation or need, the Hmong seek help from family members and clan leaders first (Lee & Yuen, 2003, p.130) before seeking medical professional.

A group of Hmong women are shown in traditional attire, including blue and red clothing with intricate silver jewelry and headpieces. They are clapping and smiling, suggesting a festive or celebratory occasion. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the women in the foreground.

Hmong in the U.S. Fact Sheet

<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/fact-sheet/asian-american-hmong-in-the-u-s/>