The Hmong In The West

Observations and Reports

Edited by
Bruce T. Downing and Douglas P. Olney
The Hmong In The West

Observations and Reports

Papers of the 1981 Hmong Research Conference
University of Minnesota

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Bruce T. Downing and Douglas P. Olney

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The Hmong refugees from Laos have come to the United States and other Western countries as part of the more general flow of refugees which ensued from the Communist victories in Vietnam and Laos in 1975. The Hmong have attracted the attention of scholars from around the country because of the unique problems of resettlement and cultural adaptation they face. Their arrival in our communities has provided many of us an opportunity to study a tribal people suddenly brought into contact with a Western society.

This volume is the product of a national Hmong Research Conference held at the University of Minnesota on October 2 and 3, 1981. With the exception of the contribution of Johns and Strecker, who were unable to attend, the articles collected here are revised versions of the papers presented at the conference. Many disciplines, subjects, and points of view are represented because of the diversity of people who are now working with the Hmong. But there is, we believe, a common theme throughout. All of the articles relate to the Hmong as they are seen in the West and the problems they face as a refugee population. The participants in the conference were drawn together because of a common interest in this population, not because of common disciplinary interests.

The volume has been organized into five sections. The first is devoted to an introductory essay by Yang Dao, presented as the keynote address at the conference, in which he outlines the recent history of his people. The section on "Hmong Culture and Culture Change" includes discussions of various aspects of Hmong customs, beliefs, and practices which have been carried over and in some cases changed in the process of resettlement. "Hmong Language and Communication" includes an article on a specific Hmong grammatical structure and three on alternative forms of communication—disguised, poetic, and musical—in Hmong society. "Language Learning Issues" includes reports on studies
of literacy and language acquisition in Hmong populations in Thailand and in the United States and discussions of problems in second language learning and of national language policies affecting refugee adaptation. The last section, called "The Hmong in America: Problems and Prospects," includes discussions of several types of problems the Hmong face here in the United States—in health, nutrition, community relations, and employment—and the progress being made in overcoming them.

We would like to thank all of the authors for their cooperation in making the rapid publication of this volume possible. We would also like to thank the Departments of Anthropology, Concerts and Lectures, East Asian Languages, History, and Linguistics, the Office of International Programs, the Graduate School, the College of Liberal Arts, and the Lao Student Association, all of the University of Minnesota, for their support of the conference and this volume. We especially want to thank the typists, Chris McKee and Pam Antonich, for their patience and skillful work, and our assistant, Vang Vang, and CURA's editor, Judith Weir, for help with editing and proofreading. Finally, we gratefully acknowledge the very strong support that the Southeast Asian Refugee Studies Project has received from the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, without which this volume would not exist.

March 1, 1982

Bruce T. Downing
Douglas P. Olney
A Note on Hmong Orthography

All references to elements of the Hmong language in this volume are presented in the Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA), which has become the standard orthography for Hmong at least in the West. Some authors have also presented, in addition, their own phonetic or phonemic transcriptions of orally elicited data.

The RPA was devised by American and French missionaries and introduced in Laos in 1953. It represents all of the consonant, vowel and tone distinctions of Hmong with ordinary Roman letters, entirely avoiding special symbols and diacritics.

Words in Hmong are generally monosyllabic. The orthographic representation of any syllable has the following general characteristics:

1. Each word includes one or two vowel letters (e.g., a, e, u, ai, ia) representing a simple or diphthongal vowel nucleus.

2. Doubling of the same vowel letter (ee, oo) indicates nasalization of the vowel and possibly, depending on the dialect, a syllable-final consonant sound like orthographic -ng in English. (There are no other final consonants in Hmong.)

3. Preceding the vowel there may be one to four consonant letters, indicating an initial consonant or consonant cluster. The letter h following another consonant indicates aspiration of the preceding sound, so that ph is similar to the English p in pat (in contrast with the unaspirated p in speak). An initial h (in the sequences hm, hn, hl) marks the sound it accompanies as voiceless. The letter n preceding another consonant indicates prenasalization; it is pronounced as m before p; n before t, d, and r; and ng before k.
4. A consonant letter as the last letter of a syllable or word represents the tone on which the vowel is produced, as follows:

- b  high tone  
- j  high falling tone  
- v  mid rising tone  
-  mid tone  
- s  mid-low tone  
- g  mid-low breathy tone  
- m  low glottalized tone  
- d  low rising tone (a predictable variant of m)

Apart from this special use of final letters to mark tone, the consonant and vowel letters generally have familiar values, the principal exceptions being:

x  pronounced like English s  
s  pronounced like English sh or the s in sugar  
z  pronounced like the English z in azure  
r  a retroflex stop sound more like English t or d than English r  
c  a sound like the t–y sequence in English fit youth  
q  a sound like k or g but pronounced with the back of the tongue further back in the mouth  
w  a vowel similar to that in English but or unstressed just  
aw  a diphthong similar to w but prolonged

One final caution to the reader: two distinct dialects of the Hmong language are spoken by refugees in the United States. These are usually referred to as Blue (or Green) Hmong and White Hmong. In addition there are many regional differences of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. The RPA orthography was designed to provide a single standard written form of each word; it will not therefore correspond to an individual's actual pronunciation in many cases.
PART ONE

INTRODUCTION
WHY DID THE HMONG LEAVE LAOS?

Yang Dao

Translated from French by Sylvianne Downing

The presence of the Hmong refugees in the United States raises many questions concerning the motivations which drove them to leave Laos in great numbers and choose the road of exile. Were they struck by some kind of fate which has pursued them since the beginning of time? Did they abandon their country because of a desire for adventure or because of the nomadic spirit that there has been a tendency to attribute to them? Did they flee their houses, their fields, and their villages to escape from misery and famine? No. The reasons are much deeper. Let us first briefly recall the traditional society of the Hmong.

Generally known under the name of "Meo"—a name that the Hmong do not accept—the Hmong constituted, in Laos, a relatively homogeneous and important ethnic group. With a strength of 300,000 people, they made up one tenth of the total population. They habitually chose the summits of the mountains to establish their homes; the land they occupied stretched over nine provinces in the north of the country.

The social organization of the Hmong is the reflection of a mentality which remains, across the ages, deeply impregnated with the concept of group, resting on the family and the clan. Accordingly, all the people who are descendants of the same ancestor live together, insofar as it is possible, and form a real community of interest that the girls alone will leave when they get married, to enter another similar community. If the family is of a somewhat flexible nature, the clan continues as a stable entity. In Laos there are more then twenty clans among the Hmong and all these clans are exogamous. Two people coming from the same clan, even separated by thousands of
miles, cannot get married, being considered as brother and sister. Marriage, war, and migrations disperse the family, but the clan ties are permanent.

This is why, as poor as they may be, the Hmong feel a sense of security in the clan system and in the network of alliances formed through marriage which assure them of counsel, help, and support by integrating them into the great family of the Hmong. This social organization, founded on a millenium of solidarity, has been able through the centuries to help the Hmong people avoid juvenile delinquency, begging, and other social evils which ravage most of the underdeveloped countries and which burden many societies considered progressive. In France and in the United States, just as in Laos, a Hmong cannot live isolated without his or her morale being hurt, his or her life disrupted and his or her future affected. This explains the great mobility of the Hmong refugees who everywhere are trying to regroup and who in this have continually astonished the welcoming countries.

The traditional Hmong economy is based essentially on the raising of crops and livestock. Although the general tendency may have been, during the last thirty years, to search for irrigated rice fields in the plains which would allow them to become sedentary, the majority of the Hmong are still using the "slash and burn" agriculture imposed by the mountainous topography. It consists in summarily clearing an area of the forest which is later set on fire. The soil, cleared and fertilized by the ashes, is used to produce successive crops after which the cultivated area is abandoned for a certain period to allow time for the land to regenerate itself. In the case of the Hmong people whose efforts are still moving toward self-sufficiency, the growing of food is of great importance. Rice is the basis of the Hmong diet while corn is intended for feeding poultry, pigs and horses. To these principal crops can be added a wide variety of vegetables and plants.

I cannot speak to you about the Hmong without mentioning the growing of the opium poppy. The "Meo"
have often been accused of having poisoned the West with this drug. What is the real story? The opium poppy originated in the Middle East. Before our era, it was already known by the Greeks. Three centuries before Jesus Christ, Hippocrates prescribed it as a medication for certain of his patients. It seems that it was toward the end of the 18th century that the Hmong, stripped of their land in the plains by the Chinese Imperial Army, started to grow, on the mountains in China, the opium poppy which had been introduced into that country by the all-powerful British East Indies Company. In Laos, the Hmong have continued to raise this crop primarily for economic and medical reasons. A small quantity of opium has a great value. Sold raw on the local markets, it produced the necessary income to pay taxes under French colonization, to buy cooking utensils, to obtain fabrics and clothing, and to send children to school. Opium is at the same time a medicine and a source of relaxation and for only a few is it the compelling drug that we know. The Hmong know its analgesic power. Isolated on their mountains, without hospitals or doctors and without modern medications, it is their only recourse against the fevers and neuralgia which often ravage their region. The Hmong never imagined that traffickers of all sorts from the countries of Asia and the West could transform this opium into heroin to poison mankind.

If growing crops is the principal activity of the Hmong, raising livestock nevertheless occupies a very important place in their traditional economy. Each family owns ten to thirty roosters, hens and pullets, five to ten pigs and often one or several horses for transportation. Many herds of steers and buffaloes roam the grassy mountains of the Hmong country.

This Hmong society, founded on a traditional solidarity and on an economy in transition, has been deeply affected by twenty-five years of war. The bloody repressions and the great exodus abroad which followed the takeover of power in Vientiane in 1975 by the Pathet Lao only accelerated its dislocation, indeed its destruction. How did the Hmong of Laos
get to where they are? To understand the cruel drama which presently affects this people of Laos, we must retrace the course of history.

The Hmong are one of the most ancient peoples in Asia. Their ancestors, they say, cultivated the plains of the Blue River and the Yellow River in China. There they expanded and became prosperous under the watchful care of the spirits of their ancestors.

One day, this peaceful people was invaded by hordes of conquerors coming from the north—the Han Chinese—who pillaged their cities and villages, massacred their wives and children, and occupied by force their fertile lands. Thus began a bloody and deadly strife that for four thousand years would pit the Hmong against the invaders. These invaders gave to the Hmong the appellation "Miao," which later became "Meo" and which means "barbarian"—an expression formerly used, in Europe, by the Romans to designate other peoples.

Defeated in the end by the troops of the Chinese Empire, who were better organized, better equipped, and greatly superior in number, the Hmong force disbanded around the middle of the 18th century. A great number of the survivors eventually faced humiliation, jail, and death. Thousands of families undertook their historic migration toward the mouth of the great rivers, continually moving through the mountains and constantly defending themselves in order to remain free men and women. Always following the ridge-line of the mountains, these families walked with a backpack, holding children by the hand and pushing their cattle and horses ahead of them, searching for an imagined Eldorado, unaware that they had just begun one of the longest adventures of human history.

In their thrust toward the south, the fugitive Hmong penetrated the north of French Indochina at the beginning of the 19th century. Their arrival in Laos would date from 1810-1820. They thought they had found, in that "country of mountains and forests, lightly populated with men but rich with game," if
not a haven of peace at least the possibility of a life of dignity for themselves and their posterity. They were ready to enter into a peaceful coexistence with all the peoples who were already there, but they were also determined to resist any who would attack their freedom and their security or who would try to dislodge them from the region, now considered their property and the property of all the Laotian peoples who lived there.

When, following the Japanese coup de force of March 9th, 1945, some French survivors took refuge in their mountains, the Hmong, without any thought for the consequences, went to the aid of these white fugitives. In keeping with their traditional hospitality, they welcomed them, nursed them, fed them, and hid them in caves so the Japanese patrols would not see them. The Hmong did not know that this action, which for them was strictly humanitarian, would provoke political consequences to the extent of bringing about the deaths of thousands of them and destroying the social and economic balance that they had attempted to preserve through the ages.

Immediately following the capitulation of Japan, the Viet Minh and the Pathet Lao took over the fight against the French presence in Indochina. At the beginning, the Hmong insisted on remaining neutral in this political and ideological conflict, which they considered foreign to them. But the Viet Minh and Pathet Lao agents began a program of eliminating those of the Hmong who had helped the French during the Japanese occupation; they arrested their relatives and displaced their families into regions under the control of their movements. In order to escape these reprisals, the Hmong naturally turned to those they thought could help them defend themselves: the French and the Royal Government of Laos. By force of circumstance, they found themselves engaged in the First War of Indochina.

After the departure of the French from Indochina in 1954, the Hmong of Laos continued to fight, under the Laotian flag, for their security and freedom and
for the independence of their country. Urged by the
king and the government to whom Washington had prom-
ised all its support and all its help, the Hmong rose
up in mass, starting in 1961, to fight the Pathet Lao
troops and the North Vietnamese army which was invad-
ing the northern provinces of the kingdom. For more
than ten years, the Hmong held fast against the North
Vietnamese divisions, in fighting that produced tens
of thousands of dead and wounded on both sides. "To
abandon the fight," said the Hmong, "is to give our
country to the North Vietnamese." This statement ex-
plains their tenacity during the fierce battles
against the better equipped and more numerous North
Vietnamese soldiers. In this "forgotten war" of Laos,
the Hmong not only helped the Pentagon avoid sending
a United States expeditionary force into the country
as they did in South Vietnam, but they also partici-
pated in the rescue of many American pilots whose
planes had been shot down by the North Vietnamese.
From this it is easy to understand why Hanoi, Moscow,
and their allies have accused the "Meo" of being
"mercenaries" of the CIA during the war and to under-
stand also the policy of genocide that they were going
to enforce against the same "Meo" after their "libera-
tion" of Indochina.

On February 21, 1973, the Vientiane Accords were
signed by the Royal Laotian Government and the Pathet
Lao, calling for peace and national reconciliation.
The Hmong, who through the agency of their political
and military leaders contributed to the realization
of these accords, brought their support to the govern-
ment of national unity under the leadership of Prince
Souvanna Phouma, and to the National Political Coal-
tion Council presided over by Prince Souphanouvong.
(I may remind you that Prince Souvanna Phouma repre-
sented the Laotian right and Prince Souphanouvong
represented the left.) The Hmong believed that un-
derstanding was possible between Laotians, whether
from the left or the right. Many of them, weary of
twenty-five years of war, started to leave the army
to return to civilian life. All the Hmong were pre-
paring to follow the eighteen-point political program
elaborated by the National Political Coalition Council
and approved by the government of national unity, a program which aspired to "build a Laotian kingdom which would be peaceful, independent, neutral, democratic, unified and prosperous in conformity with the supreme interest of the fatherland and in order to satisfy the ardent yearnings of the Laotian people of all ethnic backgrounds and the august wishes of His Majesty the King." But, for the Communists, this political program was nothing more than their Trojan horse.

On April 17, 1975, Phnom Penh fell under the regime of the Khmer Rouge. On April 30th, Saigon fell also to the North Vietnamese troops and tanks. In Vientiane, because of the presence of many foreign embassies which officially supported the new politic of "peace and national reconciliation" for Laos, the Pathet Lao employed a ruse. They organized "spontaneous" popular manifestations in the streets demanding the resignation of the ministers and the rightist generals. They prepared the way for a Communist military attack against Long Cheng, the site of the headquarters of the Commandant of the Second Military Region, the Hmong General Vang Pao, whom they considered their number one enemy. This was done by creating in the country an atmosphere of generalized hatred against the "Meo mercenaries" and by provoking military incidents in Sala Phoukhoune, southwest of the Plain of Jars, on the line of demarcation which separated the zone controlled by the right from that of the left.

Sensing a trap, the Hmong leaders decided to evacuate the base at Long Cheng on May 14, 1975. The base was by then completely isolated from the rest of the world and entirely surrounded by the Pathet Lao troops, the neutralist soldiers who had lately rallied to the Communist cause, and according to what was said, two divisions of the North Vietnamese forces, all ready to storm the last military bastion of the Laotian right. To avoid an ethnic war, which would benefit only Hanoi, the Hmong leaders took refuge in Thailand.
At the beginning, the great majority of the Hmong did not want to leave Laos, the country that they had so fiercely defended and for which they had shed so much blood. Peasants, merchants, civil servants, and soldiers without much past responsibility, they thought that they would be treated with leniency by the new masters of the country or, even better, they hoped to be able to benefit from a general amnesty, such as has existed in all countries after any civil war. They decided to live under the new regime, even if it be Communist.

Pathet Lao soldiers started to infiltrate progressively into their villages. Very politely, one who seemed to be the leader would ask each Hmong family to shelter, by turns, two of their comrades who "only want to serve you." But the Hmong soon realized that the two Pathet Lao placed in their family had as their sole mission to watch them night and day. They could go nowhere without being accompanied by the two "guardian angels" who claimed to be assuring their safety against "the terrorist activities of the rightist reactionaries." Soon the husband did not dare talk to his wife, nor the parents to their children. The two Pathet Lao were listening to every word and spying on every move. Nobody could trust anybody. From time to time, the people would be awakened in the middle of the night and the houses searched under the pretense that a "reactionary" was hiding there. Then the husband or the son was led away, a gun against his back, to an unknown destination. All, young and old, men and women, lived under the fear of being summoned, at any time, for weeks or even months of forced labor (e.g., transportation of ammunition and rice) far from their family residence, or for "seminars" (classes of political re-education), which are in actuality forced labor camps from which no one ever returns. The strain had become such that both men and women would crack. Moreover, assassinations multiplied in the Hmong mountains. People were killed in their homes and on the way to the fields. Sometimes a whole family would disappear, like a certain Hmong peasant from Muong Phoune, who with his wife and children decided to go to Bom Sone and found
death waiting for them on the road. At the sites of 
these crimes the Hmong found shells from AKA guns, 
made in Russia or China. They knew that the Pathet 
Lao troops were the only ones to have such weapons. 
But the Communist political commissar curtly answered 
their demands for an investigation by asserting that 
"reactionaries from the right" have committed these 
atrocities against the people. And, of course, no 
investigation of these crimes was ever begun by the 
Pathet Lao authorities.

As for the men of the Royal Armed Forces, regular 
and special, they were all required to register with 
the Pathet Lao military office which had replaced, in 
Long Cheng, the headquarters of General Vang Pao, 
forced into exile abroad. Several thousand Lao, Hmong, 
and Khmu who had fought under the former commandant of 
the second military region came to register, to show 
their sincerity in desiring to contribute to the goal 
of national harmony. The Pathet Lao officer immedi-
ately had them disarmed, explaining,"The war is fin-
ished, you are not going to need your American weapons. 
However, you will need new ideas to participate ef-
fectively in the reconstruction of our country." Mean-
while, the Pathet Lao soldiers remained armed to the 
teeth. Later the royalist officers were separated 
from the non-commissioned officers and privates. They 
were assembled in the auditorium of Long Cheng, where 
for a week their heads were stuffed with an intermin-
able list of crimes committed during the long war of 
Indochina by the French, the Americans, the Lao lead-
ers of the old regime, and by General Vang Pao, whom 
the Communists accused of being the principal agent 
of the CIA in Laos. But there was not a single crit-
icism or condemnation regarding the past of the of-
ficers and enlisted men who were listening attentively. 
In order to dispel their anxiety, the Pathet Lao 
political commissar even gave them the hope of being 
integrated into the popular army, for those who so 
desired, or of returning to civilian life. In the 
meantime, he added, they would have to improve their 
political education to better serve their country and 
socialism. It was only on the Plain of Jars or in 
the mountains of Samneua, at the border of North
Vietnam, where they were subsequently sent, that they would learn the real fate that was reserved for them: to be political prisoners in hard labor camps! The few escapees from those camps have reported that their comrades were to serve a sentence of five to thirty years, according to their rank and their responsibility in the "puppet army" of Vientiane (rightist) and according to the degree of permeability of each of the "seminarians" and their willingness to acquire and practice the political line of the Laotian Communist party.

To these soldiers, accused of being "mercenaries in the employ of the CIA," one must add a great number of village heads, district leaders, civil servants, administrators, teachers, professors, merchants and Hmong peasants, who were condemned to hard labor for having "collaborated" with the old regime, for having "propagated capitalistic and reactionary ideas" for having "exploited the people" or for having been "in collusion" with the Americans. Unfortunately, the Hmong were not the only victims of the Pathet Lao politic of lies, born of a desire for revenge that had been carefully cultivated over a period of thirty years. Thousands of Lao politicians, technicians, civil servants, and intellectuals have, for six years now, been in political re-education camps constructed along the Lao-Vietnamese border.

All the refugees corroborate the view that the Pathet Lao wanted to build a new Laotian society by utterly destroying the "corrupt society which had been artificially created by the French colonialists and the American imperialists with the help of traitors to the Laotian nation." Speaking of the rightists, the Pathet Lao political commissars have said: "all the harmful old bamboo stalks must be destroyed, and we must let the young shoots grow that the country will need."

In April, 1975, when a delegation of the National Political Coalition Council, of which I was a member, was in East Berlin, one of the vice-presidents of the National Assembly of the German Democratic Republic
pointed his finger at me and said, his eyes on fire: "It is because of these damned Meo that communism took so long to come into being in Laos." To these spiteful words I answered calmly but firmly at an official banquet attended by high officials of the country:

Our delegation did not come to Berlin, at the invitation of the National Assembly of the German Democratic Republic, to evoke what happened in the past, for which the real responsible parties are the Great Powers, but to show the new face of a reconciled and unified Laos, and to carry its message of peace and cooperation between all nations.

At first, I did not realize that a plan of extermination, carefully set in place by Moscow and its allies, was about to be put in motion against the Hmong of Laos. On May 9, 1975, returning from my trip to the Communist countries of Asia and Europe, I received confirmation through the Khaosane Pathet Lao, the Pravda of the Laotian Communist Party, which wrote: "We must eradicate the Meo minority completely." To suit their actions to their words, the Pathet Lao fired on a crowd of men, women, and children, estimated at about 40,000 persons, who had participated in the great peaceful march on Vientiane on May 29, 1975, in order to ask for guarantees of their security from the Prime Minister, Prince Souvanna Phouma, leader of the National Unity Government. The massacre killed between 120 and 140 people, of which some twenty died on the spot. Of the fate of these Hmong, the Prince could only say to a foreign diplomat serving in the Laotian capital: "The Meo have served me well. It is unfortunate that the price of peace in Laos is their disappearance." The Hmong understood that the only choice left to them was exile or resistance.

The first to take part in the historic exodus were the members of General Vang Pao's family, the officers who had served in his headquarters, the governors of the Lao provinces, Hmongs and Khmus of
Houa Phanh and Xieng Khouang who had closely collaborated with him, civil servants who had served in these two provinces, and the numerous members of their families. For a week, two DC 46s of the Air Force and two liaison planes, a Cessna and a Barol, based at Long Cheng, made repeated trips between the base and the base at Udorn in the northeast of Thailand. During the last days of the emergency evacuation, large American cargo planes, C 123s and C 130s also helped in the operation. The process ended abruptly on May 14, 1975, with the departure of General Vang Pao, who had wanted to stay until the last minute to assure himself that those men who had valiantly fought or worked faithfully with him would be evacuated.

Very rapidly, like a trail of gunpowder on fire, the news of General Vang Pao's departure became known to all the Hmong. Everywhere, on all the mountains, the families were consulting together in secret. One fine morning the men left for the fields and did not come back. They had gone to hide in the forest where later their wives and children would join them. Afterward, several families would decide to meet, one evening, on a certain mountain. And thus begins a long adventure strewn with death and hope.

For days and nights, weeks and months, those families would walk. Carrying their meager bundles on their backs, they followed tiger and elephant trails, going always deeper into the great forest, in order to avoid meeting other persons who, in those circumstances, could turn out to be more dangerous, more ferocious, than the most terrible of wild beasts. With the help of a compass and of an ordnance survey map, the souvenir of a lost war, the Hmong moved towards the west, where they hoped to regain freedom. They stopped only to nurse each other with wild plants or to rest to regain some strength. Their food was soon used up; they were obliged to eat roots and tree leaves to survive. In the course of their flight they were often attacked by Pathet Lao patrols lying in ambush for them. They do not have time to bury their dead, left to rot where they fell, nor to save their wounded, who
would be finished off in most cases by an enemy who did not want to be burdened with them. Those who made their way to the Mekong crossed the river with the aid of a few bamboo stalks fastened carefully together, which they placed under their armpits to help them float. Only a third of their number succeeded in reaching Thailand, in pitiful condition. Some turned back, following the Communist attacks, and rejoined the resistance. The rest either were killed in ambushes, drowned during the crossing of the Mekong, were taken prisoner by the Pathet Lao, or simply died of hunger and fatigue.

After the massacre of May 29, 1975, at Hin Heup, a certain number of survivors went underground. They were later joined by soldiers, officers or enlisted men who had refused to register with the Pathet Lao or who had escaped from the camps of "Samana," and by merchants, peasants and students. In small groups, they hid in the great forest, hoping that the political situation inside the country would become better with time and that they would be able one day to come out of their hiding places and return quietly to an active life, growing crops and raising animals, thereby making their contribution, in peace, to the development of Laos.

Annoyed by the obstinate refusal of the Hmong to report to the Communist authorities, the Pathet Lao in October, 1975, sent a punitive expedition against the inhabitants of Pha Ngou, a Hmong village located in the mountain range of Phou Bia, which reaches an altitude of 2820 meters south of the Plain of Jars. A Pathet Lao company surprised a group of Hmong peasants, including a few men but mostly women and children, while they were working in the fields. Seized by panic, they started to run in all directions. The Communist soldiers opened fire on the fugitives. The result was several dead and many wounded.

Exasperated by this new massacre, the Hmong decided to respond violently. Several hundred of them came down from Phou Bia, with weapons that they had prudently hidden in caves. The group deployed itself
in the plain and attacked the Pathet Lao posts of Muong Cha, at the foot of the great mountains. It was a widely celebrated exploit. Like wildfire the revolt spread to all the mountains to the south of the Plain of Jars. All the roads were cut, all the bridges dynamited. The Communists no longer felt secure anywhere. The convoys which tried to bring food to them were immediately destroyed. All the Pathet Lao reinforcements, dispatched to those areas to try to subdue the rapidly spreading resistance, were destroyed. The losses were such that the Communists had to mobilize young college and high school students to fight the Hmong. Most of them would be killed in an ambush or crushed under tons of stones and rock that the resisting forces would push down from the top of the rocky cliffs onto their enemy. This is why many young Lao chose desertion or exile in Thailand to escape the mobilization called for by the Pathet Lao authorities.

And every day the situation became more serious for the Communists. The Khmu, another Laotian ethnic group, took their place next to the Hmong to fight against the government. Encouraged by the successes of the Hmong and Khmu resistance, the neutral Lao who had hurriedly joined the Pathet Lao cause at the beginning of May, 1975, tried to rebel, in the region of Van Vieng, against the new masters. They were bloodily repressed. The Lao of the Old Right also started in their turn to rouse themselves. Attacks multiplied in the capital and in the major cities of Laos, causing deaths and injuries among the "advisers" from Russia and North Vietnam.

Moscow and Hanoi then imposed on the Vientiane government a twenty-five-year treaty of cooperation which was signed on July 17, 1977, between Vietnam and Laos. This treaty legalized the presence of 60,000 soldiers from Hanoi who had in fact never left the territory of Laos since 1960, in spite of the Geneva Accords of 1962 demanding the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Laos.
Led by Pathet Lao, 17,000 North Vietnamese soldiers, we are told, undertook a large clean-up operation against the Hmong and Khmu resistance. They meant to try out their famous theory which calls for burning everything (houses, harvests, and crops), destroying everything (cattle and other domestic animals), and killing everything (men, women and children). To this end they used heavy artillery (105mm and 130mm cannons) and aircraft (T 28s and Mig 17s and 21s). The weapons these aircraft carried were napalm bombs and dart and gas rockets. "These rockets," a survivor told me, "are dreadful. The first type, launched from planes, explode at tree height and project thousands of small darts in all directions. The second, still more terrifying, spread red and blue clouds which leave almost no hope for one unfortunate enough to breathe them. One starts to cough and vomit, one's nose bleeds, one gets dysentery and in the end dies." A young Hmong refugee who arrived in France in May 1980, revealed a new Soviet weapon, now used in Laos against the Hmong. "At the beginning of 1979," he reported, "our village was attacked by Communist planes. One of these planes launched two rockets. As they exploded at about 100 meters above the ground, they released a kind of rain. The drops of this rain became hard while falling, forming small white and yellowish spots on the leaves of the trees, the plants, the rocks, and on the surface of the ground. From those spots there arose a very strong odor which would choke off your breath. I was rescued just in time by a relative who dragged me, half unconscious from the effect of this suffocating odor, far away from the explosions, and who made me smoke some opium pipes. This gave me back my wind and I could breathe again. Diluted by the monsoon rains, these spots quickly polluted springs and brooks. Whoever is unfortunate enough to drink their waters will die of dysentery, suffering atrocious pains." According to the testimony of these former resistance fighters, the Soviets are experimenting with chemical weapons as well as with bacteriological weapons in the mountains of North Vietnam.
At the present time more than 100,000 Hmong have found refuge abroad. This number amounts to about one-tenth of the total population of Laos or one-third of the Hmong born in Laos. The refugee camps in Thailand still shelter more than 60,000 Hmongs. Forty to fifty thousand of them have settled in the United States, 6,000 to 8,000 in France, 500 in Australia, 200 in Canada, and about 100 in Argentina. At last the People's Republic of China has also begun to welcome a certain number of them.

Are the Hmong a people on the road to extinction? It would be difficult to affirm this. They have survived the vicissitudes of history and have retained, through the ages, their own identity. Dispersed once again all over the world, they feel today more solidarity than ever among themselves. Moreover, supported always by friends and research workers such as yourselves, they can again have confidence in the future. Deeply rooted in their traditional culture and determined to move in the direction of innovation and progress, they mean to preserve their own personality while trying continually to better integrate themselves into a welcoming society such as yours. Traveling through the United States in 1977 and in 1980, I was able to observe the progress already registered by the Hmong refugees. Today an ever greater number of them speak English and are employed. Others are still taking classes, in the schools or at the university. If tomorrow the hope of returning to Laos should vanish from their dreams, at least they will be good American citizens, useful and ever grateful.

St. Paul, October 1st, 1981

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PART TWO

HMONG CULTURE AND CULTURE CHANGE
CLAN LEADERSHIP IN THE HMONG COMMUNITY
OF PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND*

John Finck

A long time ago Hmong legend tells of a flood. The only survivors were a brother and sister who climbed into a wooden drum when the rains began.

It rained for many days. When the waters receded, the siblings discovered they were all alone. "Where are the people?" cried the girl. "And the animals," said the brother. Sadness filled their hearts.

But the brother had an idea. "Marry me," he said. "We can have children."

"But I can't marry you," she replied. "You're my brother."

He persisted. Everyday he pleaded. And everyday she refused, saying "we are brother and sister."

One day after confronting her brother, she picked up two stones. "Throw yours down one side of the mountain," she said. "I'll throw mine down the other side. If they come back up the mountain, then I'll marry you."

So he threw his stone and she, hers.

That night, as his sister slept, the boy stole down the mountain. He found his stone and carried it back to the mountain top. Again, he crept down the mountain and carried his sister's stone to the top, too.

The next morning he pointed to the rocks for his sister: "Look, the stones came back. They are together. Now we can marry."

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They married but their first baby was round, like a stone, with no arms or legs. In disgust, they cut the infant to bits and threw the pieces away.

Some pieces fell in the garden. And they became the Vang clan because Vang sounds like garden in Hmong. Some pieces fell in weeds and grasses. They became the Thao clan because Thao sounds like weeds and grass in Hmong. Some pieces fell on the goat house. And they became the Li clan because Li sounds like goat house. Some pieces fell on the pig house. They became the Moua clan because Moua sounds like pig house in Hmong. And the next day every family had a house. And chickens and pigs and oxen and horses.¹

Wherever the Hmong may spread in the new world they come bearing the name of their clan. To Providence have come Hmong from thirteen of the major clans: Vang, Thao, Lee, Moua, Yang, Kue, Khang, Xiong, Her, Hang, Chang and Chue. The clan system organizes Hmong society. By providing security for its members through a set of mutual obligations, the clan system is a natural path toward self-sufficiency for the Hmong in America. These claims are based on my participation with the Hmong community in Providence, the third largest settlement of Hmong in the United States.²

In Laos the Hmong lived in extended families of three to four generations. Traditionally, the clans provided all of the social services required of their members. Each clan had skilled individuals who were healers, marriage brokers, teachers and disciplinarians. Children contributed to the wealth of the family and its clan. More children, especially sons, assured the family and clan of greater prosperity. Fellow clan members regard each other as brother and sister. Marriage between clan members, no matter how distant, is strictly taboo — as suggested by the sister in the flood story. Clan members are related sometimes by blood, sometimes by marriage but always by custom. In time of need, a man will turn first to his clan. The clan is obliged to respond, whether for money or advice. A man who looks elsewhere brings shame to his clan. A clan that fails to respond also loses respect
in the community. Bonds are strongest within clans; weakest between them.

In Providence, each clan elects one or two of its most capable members as leaders, men who either distinguished themselves as senior military officers in the army or who were village or district chiefs in Laos. Younger bilingual leaders might also serve as clan leaders if their ability to speak English or work with Americans was respected.

Moua Yang is 25 years old. He lives with his wife, two children, his mother and step-father and three unmarried brothers and sisters on the third floor of a sagging Victorian house in South Providence. Two months ago, he graduated from English-as-a-second language class at a local job training center under contract to the state refugee program and began looking for a job. The best leads came from members of the Yang clan. A cousin in Leominster, Massachusetts called to tell Moua of an opening in a plastics factory. His grandfather drove him the forty-five miles to the interview, but the job was filled before they arrived. Moua realized that a car was as necessary as English for getting a job. His first hurdle was the Rhode Island driver's test, no model of clarity even in English. He failed the exam three times, tripping over words like "pedestrian" and phrases like "slow-poke." On the fourth try he passed. The next expense was a driving teacher hired at the going rate of $200 for road lessons. Moua persevered and passed — this time on his first try. Then came the hardest part — buying a used car. The Yang elders said, we are small people so buy a small Japanese car. Moua visited the used car lots, knowing more about second hand water buffalos than old cars. He settled on a 1978 Chevette hatchback. Salesprice: $3,000. For financing Moua turned not to a bank or General Motors but to his clan and extended family. Between his grandfather's three brothers in Providence, two brothers-in-law in Salem, Oregon and a second uncle and another brother-in-law in California, Moua raised $2,500. The cherry-toned Chevette was his without interest or even a job.
Clans offer security. The larger the clan the better the protection of relatives who can help find jobs or better apartments. Clans and extended families are the magnets drawing their dispersed members to larger communities like St. Paul, Santa Ana, Kansas City and Providence. What Americans call "secondary migration" is simply coming into this country and searching for what shelter clans and families can offer.

So strong are clan loyalties that sometimes they work against the greater interest of the Hmong. For their own reasons the Vue and Thao clans in Providence have withdrawn from the Hmong-Lao Unity Association, setting themselves apart from the machinations of the community. Fear of obligation can shadow self-help projects that depend on some degree of inter-clan cooperation. To western eyes they are all Hmong, but clan distinctions can result in unforeseen consequences.

A Hmong woman with several small children was convalescing at home after a serious operation. Realizing her burden of child care, a nun from the local parish found a responsible Hmong woman who volunteered to babysit in the home of the mother as she recovered. As desperate as she was for someone to look after the children, she refused the offer because her clan was not willing to obligate itself to another for the sake of a babysitter.

The clan system survives because the Lao government never extended its rule over the far-flung mountain people. In the absence of national rule, the Hmong governed themselves, resolving their differences through custom. Because marriage involves the union of two clans, it is an acceptable time for airing disputes. Part of the marriage negotiations include a hammering out of old grievances.

Last spring, at a wedding between the Moua and Vue clans in Providence, the grandfathers from each family brought forth claims that stemmed from incidents years ago in Laos. One family said that a clan sister was beaten by her husband from the other clan. The other clan brought forth old debts that it said were long
overdue from the other clan. The marriage feast was postponed for hours while witnesses from the two clans exchanged heated words in the back bedroom of the bride's parent's apartment. Guests from Connecticut and Massachusetts lounged around the living room waiting for the two sides to settle disputes that happened when the bride and groom were children in distant villages. The harangue spilled into the night. Fearing that his guests would leave with empty stomachs, the bride's distraught father served the wedding meal without the marriage negotiators. Eventually an agreement was reached. Fines were paid. A letter of reconciliation was written and signed by the families. Each clan was vindicated. The wedding continued with vodka vainly soothing the memories of justice.

Clan leadership pivots on age. "We are your children," began Doua Yang, a young, bilingual man, himself the father of three, to the clan leaders. When the elders speak, the community responds. Last winter several hundred Hmong assembled for a community meeting on two days word-of-mouth notice, nearly filling the Veterans Auditorium. The older clan leaders -- who have the political power to mobilize their community -- rely on the younger bilingual men for a path through the American woods. The younger men have ideas but not the community respect which only their elders may confer. In the best instances, the two work together.

By no means are the Hmong united on the subject of clans. Some put clan allegiance first. Others feel that in America, as refugees "we must all be Hmong." Some feel that the mutual assistance associations should only be for purposes of resettlement. Others feel that the associations are political organizations with dues-paying members and the legitimacy to speak on behalf of the Hmong community. Whatever the shade of opinion, nearly all leaders acknowledge a place for clans in Hmong community life.  

Americans have a habit of undoing Hmong leadership. Sometimes we act unilaterally or expect a younger bilingual employee of an agency to speak on behalf of his or her community. Both instances undermine, the first
by not permitting the leadership to gain experience in making decisions and running programs and the second by causing rifts between the older and younger generations of leadership. By going directly to the local mutual assistance association, Americans can deal face-to-face with recognized clan leaders in a way that enhances the integrity of both parties. Their leadership survived a war and years of dislocation; their communications network rivals our computers and photocopiers. Why not put what already works to mutually acceptable use?

Because self-help, mutual assistance and ultimately self-sufficiency depend, in part, on the quality of leadership, the State Coordinator of Refugee Resettlement in Rhode Island, Mr. Cleo Lachapelle, has chosen to recognize and support the incorporation of the Hmong, Lao, Cambodian and Vietnamese societies. Each group has been provided with funds to hire a full or part-time staff person and equip him or her with an office in their community.

Those Hmong who feel their future lies in the United States have begun to scheme about economic development. Former general Vang Pao chose the first national Hmong leadership conference held in St. Paul last June to unveil his plans for a Lao Family Development Corporation, complete with stock issue and operating budgets for supermarkets and gas stations. Although Providence has yet to see its first Hmong-run business, some of the leaders dream about starting a restaurant, a grocery store, a kung-fu studio, a cinema and a day care center.

The Hmong have a ready market in the 3,000 plus members of their community who would rather buy rice from a Hmong store than either the local Star Market or the Korean grocery store. By utilizing the clan system, the Hmong have the means of raising capital. By loaning money within the clan and extended family, the Hmong have bought cars. Can similar loans for a business be far behind? Forward-looking communities will encourage their economic development with loans, leadership training and technical assistance.
Like their untapped market, the Hmong also have unrealized political power. By recognizing the power of the ballot and remaining in large organized communities, the Hmong could represent a sizeable block of votes that no politician could afford to ignore. One clan leader in Providence has already become a citizen. If others followed, the Hmong could elect one of their own to the city council and state legislature inside of ten years. Political power may seem distant for a people so new to cities like Providence and St. Paul. But ten years ago the Hmong never imagined themselves in a world beyond their mountains.

Like the story of the flood, the body of the Hmong has once again been cut and pieces thrown, not down the mountain, but around the world. Some fell -- not in weeds -- but in St. Paul. Others fell -- not on the goat house -- but in Santa Ana. Still others fell -- not on the pig house -- but in Providence. And the next day, says the myth, the Hmong were restored.

NOTES

* Ua tsaug ntau to all those in the Providence Hmong community who have welcomed me so often into their homes and to Mr. Cleo Lachapelle, the State Coordinator of Refugee Resettlement in Rhode Island, whose idea it was.


2. No two Hmong communities in the United States have the same configuration of leadership. My observations are limited to Rhode Island and, I hope, will provoke comparisons with other forms of Hmong leadership.
3. Another factor, beyond the reach of this paper, which can influence the selection of leadership is affiliation or non-affiliation with an American religious denomination.

4. Several Hmong readers of this paper have concluded, by way of either summary or criticism, that I wrongly view the clans as political parties. Lest anyone mistake: clans are not political parties. But many of their actions are based on political considerations. Some Hmong readers, no doubt, would like to present an idealized picture of unity to outsiders. But like any normal and therefore complex community, clans and clan members hold many points of view.

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HMONG MARRIAGE CUSTOMS: A CURRENT ASSESSMENT

Kao N. Vang

In this paper I will discuss Hmong marriage customs, beginning with a review of a couple of Hmong legends relating to marriage, followed by a discussion of marriage customs in Laos and the United States and finally presenting the results of a survey of Hmong opinions about changes in Hmong marriage customs.

LEGENDS ABOUT MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

The Story of the Beginnings of Hmong Marriage Customs

The first two persons in this world were Poj Cuas and her brother (referred to together as Poj Cuas Ob Nus Muag in the Hmong language). God told the Hmong to distinguish the name Poj Cuas Ob Nus Muag from Nkauj Iab and Nraug Oo. "When you are talking about marriage customs, you should use the name Poj Cuas Ob Nus Muag; when you are talking about death customs, you should use the name Nkauj Iab Nraug Oo." It appears that these four people were only one brother and sister, but the Hmong had separate terms for them at different times. (See the list of names in the Appendix.)

Nkauj Ntsuab and Sis Nab were the man and woman that God sent down to the earth to produce human beings. Nkauj Ntsuab was so beautiful that Sis Nab, her husband, was afraid someone might take his wife. Sis Nab took Nkauj Ntsuab all over the earth: north, south, east, and west. So Nkauj Ntsuab and Sis Nab had no chance to have babies.

One day, God's flying horse had told Poj Cuas Ob Nus Muag to open God's stone gate so he could fly Poj Cuas Ob Nus Muag to the earth to see Nkauj Ntsuab and Sis Nab. So they opened the stone gate of God and the horse flew the brother and sister down to earth.

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First they came to Ntuj Tsha Teb Nqhuab, a place close to the desert, where hardly anything could grow. Now, it is the Middle East. Then God's flying horse told them that he would come back to pick them up. But they waited and waited and nothing happened, and they could not find Nkauj Ntsuab and Sis Nab.

Poj Cuas Ob Nus Muag travelled to the second place called Ntuj Daus Xib Teb Daus Npu, which means the place where it snows all year round and is very cold. They could not live there either. Then they travelled to the third place called Ntuj Khaib Huab, which means the place that is dark for six months and daytime for six months. They could not live there either, so they travelled again to the fourth place called Muam Nkauj Lig Teb, which means "Mongolia" today. Poj Cuas Ob Nus Muag decided to live in Mongolia, but they were only brother and sister.

One day they heard the sounds of God's horse flying over them, and the brother and sister called out to God, and God heard their calling. So God came down to Poj Cuas Ob Nus Muag, and God spoke to them about how they got on the earth. They told God that his horse flew them to the earth, but that he didn't pick them up later. The horse had told them that he would take them to see Nkauj Ntsuab and Sis Nab, but they could not be found. God looked around the world and saw that Nkauj Ntsuab and Sis Nab did not have any babies.

So God asked Poj Cuas Ob Nus Muag to stay on earth and produce human beings. They told God they did not want to stay, but, ordered by God, the brother and sister had to stay.

They asked God how they could get back to Home Heaven. God told them that he would grow bamboo here. When they did not want to live on earth anymore, they could use the bamboo to guide them back to Ntuj Tsha Teb Nqhuab and to wait for him there. He would send his horse to pick them up and take them back to heaven.
So today when a Hmong dies, a piece of bamboo will be the guide to take him or her back to where he or she was born, then to Mongolia, then to Ntuj Khaib Huab, then to Ntuj Daus Xib Teb Daus Npu, then to Ntuj Tsha Teb Nqhuab, and from there God will send his horse to carry them back to heaven.

After that Poj Cuas Ob Nus Muag lived in Mongolia for seven years and they had a baby, but the baby had no head, no legs, and no hands. So they appealed to God again. God told them that that was the beginning of human beings. God told them that they should cut up that baby in as many pieces as possible, and to throw those pieces in the yard the next morning, and each piece would grow to be the husband and wife of one family. They should name that family's last name after the pieces that hang on any kind of tree or anything in their yard. That is how the Hmong have the last names of Vang, Yang, Lee, Xiong, Hong, Moua, Kong, Khue, Lor, Pha, and so on. During every engagement the go-betweens sing a song about people having to be married before they can live together.

Description of the Roots in Hmong Legend of How the People Had to Marry

Tub Liaj Lus and Ntruv Me were two brothers who went to learn about marriage customs from God. Their parents were Yeu Txis, the father, and Pus Txis, the mother. They worked on the farm from early morning and came home in the dark at night.

One day the two brothers saw that the birds and animals were male and female and had husbands and wives. The two brothers discussed this and said, "Why do these animals that don't grow and harvest the food that they eat have husbands and wives?" "You and I work all day, and we have no wives. We need to go and ask mother and father what is wrong with us."

They went home very sad that day and asked their mother and father the above question. Then

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Yeu Txis, the father, told his two sons, "Sons, tomorrow you have to prepare your own lunches, and walk to heaven to learn something from God." In those days, long ago, it took only seven days to walk to the Home Heaven of God. The brothers got enough for their own sacks, and completed their mission. The two brothers learned the marriage customs from God for seven years. Now it was time for them to come back to earth.

God told his wife, "Kill a chicken to prepare for Tub Liaj Lus's and Ntruv Me's lunch." She went over to look at the chickens. They had only two chickens. She could not decide what to do. "If I kill the female first, the male will have no wife. If I kill the male first, the female will have no husband." So she decided not to kill her chickens to send along with these two brothers. She had another idea, which was to send only fish along.

She went to the pond to feed the fish, but she could not catch a fish. Instead, she caught the dragon's daughter who had become a fish. In the old days, dragons had power in the water and the rain. God's wife killed the dragon's daughter and sent her along with Tub Liaj Lus and Ntruv Me for their lunch. But God already knew that the two brothers would have the dragon's daughter for their lunch. God told the two brothers, "After you eat your lunch, do not wash your hands. If you do, the water will flood the earth and wash you away."

The younger brother knew and remembered what God told them, but the older brother did not remember. After he ate, he washed his hands and mouth. The dragon then smelled that his daughter had died. The dragon's great power caused the waters to flood the two brothers. As the brothers were on the run, they threw all the papers on which they had written the knowledge about the marriage customs down into the river. The two brothers came home without anything. Their father told them to go back to ask God again.
The two brothers went to see God again and to tell him that they didn't listen to what God was telling them, when they washed their hands and mouths after eating. God said, "Tub Liaj Lus and Ntruv Me, this time you two have to swallow the water that comes from my mouth. I will talk, and you will remember in your hearts." This time it took only seven days for them to learn all of the marriage customs.

Because of the two brothers, from that time to this, the Hmong have no written language. This was because the two brothers didn't listen to God. The customs that were written down on papers were lost in the dragon's flood. So God named each song of the marriage customs after that by saying, "These songs you two brothers should call 'Zaj Txooj,' which means 'the Songs of the Dragon Flood.'"

When Tub Liaj Lus and Ntruv Me came home, neither was old enough to be married yet, so they could not practice their marriage customs. So they went and caught one female monkey, Poj Nyaj, and one female chimpanzee, Poj Cuag, to be an example of the marriage customs. They showed this to the King of the Northern Sky and to the King of the Southern Sky to see the marriage customs of Tub Liaj Lus and Ntruv Me. They then freed the two animals, Poj Nyaj and Poj Cuag. Poj Nyaj was very hungry and she ate the wrong foods. She became sick because of the wrong food she had eaten because she had practiced the marriage customs too long.

Poj Nyaj told the two brothers, "Tub Liaj Lus and Ntruv Me, from now on when using any of the marriage customs, use my name, or else the husband or wife will die." So after that, any bride was called Nkauj Nyab after Poj Nyaj. The sister who looks after the family customs concerning the Hmong language, during the Hmong marriage, is called Niam Taim Yuab, which means Poj Cuag.
HMONG MARRIAGE CUSTOMS UP UNTIL TODAY

The practice of Hmong men and women to live together, Hmong social marriage, friendship, fellowship, appreciation, sympathy, love and marriage between the sexes is as natural as eating. The number of Hmong divorces is low if you compare it with that in an industrialized country. A simple social marriage among the Hmong results from sexual attraction which naturally results in sexual intercourse.

Hmong people were often married at a very young age in the past. But it was uncommon for a child to be married under ten years of age. Most of the youth were married by the time they were fifteen however. Of course these were not love matches, and serious love affairs later in life with men and women to whom they were not married were quite likely to occur.

In Hmong culture it is not permissible to marry a person with the same clan name. However, because descent is reckoned through the father's line, and the child is a member of his or her father's clan, it is permissible to marry certain cousins. These include for a man the daughters of his mother's brothers and his father's sisters and for a woman, the sons of her father's sisters and her mother's brothers.

It is common to have sexual relations with a potential marriage partner before marriage. Nobody in the family will raise any objections.

Marriage Negotiations

The usual way for a marriage to be negotiated is for the engagement to be made by the parents of the man and woman through "go-betweens" (May Kong). The engagement is a contract between the parents of the young people. While the bride is not paid the gift, the value of the gift often goes a long way toward securing a favorable decision by the girl's parents.
The two go-betweens come to the home of the girl. Much of the work of making the engagement is often done by means of songs. By certain songs they announce their mission to the girl's parents. Other songs carry the work along, even to the matter of approximately arranging the gift.

Sometimes the parents are unwilling to marry off a daughter. Then the young couple may go to the third day of the third moon. This means that a girl has decided to run away with the boy to his home to be married. After three days and three nights both will come back to the home of the girl's parents for a wedding. This method is very common in the young Hmong social marriage. However, the go-betweens are still used for the marriage. It is difficult for the young married to get a divorce because of their promise to the go-betweens. Two persons from each side will be the ones who are responsible for the young married contract. As go-betweens, their role is to keep the promise of the two young married people and to make sure no one breaks the promise.

The Hmong maintain that in the past, to select their sons-in-law and daughters-in-law, we consulted ancient characters (symbols) with which we were acquainted. We consulted these symbols to see if they agreed with us about offering the bride to the groom or not. The go-betweens followed the old traditions from the beginning of life concerning how God created the earth and the people. The symbols would show the groom's go-betweens whether the engagement could take place or not. The go-betweens are professional people who know a lot about Hmong marriage customs and are especially trained to do this.

As an example of marriage customs, in Hmong society a family which has characters in its name which mean "family that has dirty water" could not join with another family that has characters meaning "family that has no disease." The dirty water family means "the family that has leprosy." The clean water family means "the family that has no disease."
Today these characters are still believed in among the Hmong, and the beliefs are still strong about not letting a daughter or son marry into a family that is not agreed to by the parents.

Sometimes the groom's parents or go-betweens (May Kong) arrive at the bride's house with several gallons of corn or rice whiskey. Often cigarettes are exchanged as a symbol of honor to the bride's male cousins, uncles, brothers and grandfather. The females in her family have no right to negotiate at all. The important decisions are made by the men in that family only. The symbol of offering cigarettes shows that their engagement mission is completed—nothing else.

The go-betweens announce their mission by singing a song. Most of the work is done by the go-betweens of both sides. Custom provides that the bride's parents are responsible for food, while the groom's people remain in their house. Whether the negotiation of the bride is offered or not, there are still meals put on the table. There is no charge to the groom's side for the cost of eating. Most of the time, the go-betweens will spend as much as one or two weeks to finish their work. The amount of money paid the go-betweens is quite low, if you compare it with the valuable time spent. But the May Kong never do this job as their only source of income, anyway.

The marriage feast—held in two places—is at the home of the parents of the groom, and at the home of the bride's parents. The bride must leave her own home for that of the groom. The first feast takes place at her house. The costs of the feast in the bride's house, the two families share equally. Both invite guests, men and women, to the wedding. These guests will bring their presents to the young couple who were just married. Mostly the bride's side—aunts, uncles, cousins, sisters, brothers, grandparents—are those who bring a lot of presents, and sometimes these presents are worth more than the bride's price. However, the groom still has to pay the bride's price, but he will get most of the pre-
sents back and count it as the beginning of their life. Back in the old days, if the bride's parents were middle or upper class people when their daughter married, a female cow, horse, or water buffalo was given to their daughter to start her new life. If you compare this gift of an animal and all the presents, the groom almost gets back double what he pays in bride price. It is almost as if you invest in something. Everything the bride's people have given to them is listed on paper on the day of the ceremony. The groom must honor and give thanks to the people who have given them gifts by kneeling and bowing three times for each gift. The go-betweens will stand by and order the groom to do so. This is a significant honor of the Hmong marriage customs. The groom pays his honor to the people who have given them gifts, especially to the bride's parents first and then to the grandparents, uncles, brothers, cousins, and so on.

It takes about seven years to learn all the Hmong marriage customs and to become a professional to carry out the customs. The Hmong consider that to offer you their daughter means the loss of their freedom. The bride's go-between sings a special song to show that loss.

Polygamy or "Sharing"

The large number of our men who had more than one wife was increased from 1960 to 1970 because of the war. There were large numbers of widows who needed husbands to support their families. In Hmong culture, "No husband means no family." In the fourteen years of war in Laos we lost thousands of our young men. There was a significant sharing of husbands with those wives. In order to avoid jealousy among those wives, custom provided that each wife must be visited by her husband on a certain night. This practice we call "sharing."

The idea of sharing a husband in everything is strongly emphasized in the upbringing of children. When the children grow up, they find it natural to
share love and affection with others. That, however, does not mean that a woman can have more than one husband.

In Hmong society, if a woman has more than one husband, we consider her a prostitute. It is taboo for the woman to have more than one husband. However this practice is changing in the Hmong society, especially for the young and educated.

Hmong society is divided into two groups: the educated and the uneducated. A study made in 1970 shows that the uneducated group has a higher polygamous rate than the educated group. The non-educated group had a 75 percent polygamous marriage rate in 1970. Those educated through high school had less than a 25 percent polygamous marriage rate.

The 1970 study gave us a significant look into Hmong society. It showed that there were no social security benefits and no retirement homes. Therefore, the more children one had, the more people to take care of one in one's old age.

Divorce

The go-between's power exists until he moves to a different state or until he dies. If there is any trouble between the wife and husband which the go-between cannot solve, the next step is to go to the clan leader. If the leader of the clan cannot solve it, then they will go to the chief of the village. If the chief of the village cannot solve it, then they can go to the mayor of the town. If the mayor of the town and his council cannot solve it, then this is the time that they can go to court.

The court cannot make any decision about who is wrong until the court hears from the go-betweens. In our Hmong court system, we do not use lawyers to represent anyone. The man or woman involved is the one that can tell the court the whole truth. The court can give permission to whoever wants the divorce, but on the other hand, the party that is
found guilty has to pay everything back to the party that is not guilty.

Divorce fees among the Hmong are very high. For example, if a man wants to get a divorce without a good reason, he may have to pay double his wife's wedding cost. He has lost face, paid a lot of his money to the clan leader, to the leader of the town or city, and also to the court. He may not be able to pay all of this at the same time, and his income for the rest of his life will be used to pay off these debts.

On the other hand, if the court finds that the woman is guilty, then it is the same story for her. She has to pay a fee to the local leadership and pay her husband's bride price back to him. If there have been any children by this marriage, the husband is the one to get them. But if the husband is the guilty one, he then would get nothing but his clothes. Thus, there is a significant punishment to both parties.

If you are a Vang married to a Xiong, or one of the other thirteen clans, and just get a divorce without a good reason, you may never go back and touch their clan again. If you should wish to remarry into that clan, before the negotiations, you must put a penalty fee on the table first.

A SURVEY OF ATTITUDES TOWARD MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

Setting

An important question which has been asked of the clan leaders is "Who will choose the marriage partners now? What will you do if your sons and daughters do not permit you to choose the partner?" A strong response came from the elderly and the clan leaders. "He or she is my son or daughter. I want to see and be responsible for their future. This must come from the parents."
On June 17, 1981, the first Hmong National Conference was held in St. Paul, and those attending talked and debated a great deal about the changes that have taken place in our culture, and those customs we need to keep. At that meeting, we never came to any agreement on solutions, because there were two sides with different ideas. I did discover that at this meeting we had not included the clan leaders. The people that were not at this meeting were the "go-betweens" and the people who study social science. The May Kong, or "go-betweens," are the professional people who only deal with marriage customs. They know about the needs, and everything that has to be done. The clan leaders in the family are the ones who make the decisions about what is right or wrong. The social scientists are the ones who study social behavior and culture changes and society. Therefore, we must all get together and listen to each other. Then the national leadership will be the only ones to make the important decisions about the Hmong in America, France, Canada, Australia and Thailand.

Methods

During July 27-30, 1981, I traveled to St. Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota, to interview the Hmong clan leaders, Hmong teenagers, and also former military leaders from Laos.

I did this study to learn how Hmong culture and marriage customs have changed since the Hmong came to America about five years ago. It was also interesting to look at the changes in Hmong history.

In this research, I went to the Lao Family Community in St. Paul. In their office, there are many former Hmong elderly clan leaders taking ESL classes. I interviewed thirty people. Twenty were men and ten were women. All the men who participated in English classes were among those who had the least education in Laos, and who could not speak even one word of English. These people lived in Laos under the old Hmong traditions, customs, culture, and
social relationships which are totally different from the ones they live under now in this country.

Results of Interviews

In this research project, I interviewed two former Nai Kong (supervisors of villages). These two gentlemen were clan leaders and knew most of the Hmong customs. They pointed out how American customs looked to them. Their neighbors had among them divorced women, without husbands and with six or seven children. Should we let our young teenagers learn and practice this system of behavior? If we are human beings and can take care of our own people, should we let our people walk in the street without family? The Nai Kong told me about the way that God is telling people how to live together. There is the responsibility of being a parent that the young couple who want to get married should think about. They depend on their family. Their relationships back to the family are very strong. If you have a daughter or son with bad behavior not suitable to the society, you as the parents will lose face, and to lose face in our culture means you have lost your country. So in that case the parents have the power and responsibility to assist their son or daughter until the time when no one can really do anything that will cause the family to be broken up.

In this research, I found that the majority of "free" brides have more problems than the ones for whom bride price was paid. The bride price is a good tie to tie the young couple together and also all the relatives from the bride's side. It is a custom that has been followed generation after generation. The strong belief in old traditions is good, especially where it concerns marriage customs.

In the old days, God told Tub Liaj Lus and Ntruv Me that every young man that marries should pay the bride price as follows: kub npaib txias (gold) - 3 grams; nyiav npaib lag (silver) - 3 ounces. This would give their lives sunshine and no trouble to their families, because God said so.
Since then, the Hmong have paid the bride price when they have married in order to keep the tradition of the old days when God told his people what to do.

It was a surprise for me, during my three days in St. Paul and Minneapolis, to learn that 100 percent of the young people 18 to 25 years old, agree that the bride price should be paid (in American dollars up to $1,000). Having a wedding reception or dinner depends on the two families. (These young people are unmarried high school and college students and include a former colonel's son and a general's son.)

By custom, the marriage system in Laos has three paths:

1. engagement through go-betweens
2. kidnapping the bride by the groom
3. the bride following the groom to his home to marry him

Of thirty teenagers interviewed, 100 percent agree that this engagement method is the best way. There are currently different ideas about Hmong marriage practices among the older Hmong. From age 30 to age 60, they are divided into two groups, the educated and the uneducated. They each have different ideas about Hmong marriage customs. One thing that nearly all of the older people agree on is that marriage customs should be carried out by the May Kong or go-betweens. The following table shows the difference between the ideas of the older people and the young, the educated and the uneducated.

**Question:** Should the payment of the bride price be as much as $1,000?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 - 25</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 60</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uneducated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 60</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary and Conclusions

Hmong marriage customs are often debated, but good decisions regarding marriage require a solid knowledge base. That is the reason for this research to find out from the Hmong clan leaders, the go-betweens, former supervisors of villages, and others who used to deal with marriage customs in Laos, what Hmong marriage customs are and the current problems. This is the first known research done by a Hmong person on the current assessment of marriage among the Hmong in the United States.

There are significant customs among the Hmong which nobody in Hmong history has ever recorded. The customs have been passed on to the young people from generation to generation. I found Hmong people who could still tell me about the first two persons on earth. I discovered that most of the people that I interviewed did not understand Hmong society.

I did speak to two former supervisors of villages in Laos, whose words I translated into English, and I count them as Hmong philosophers. They answered every question I asked regarding Hmong marriage customs. They said, "It is not in human nature for the young to follow the elderly, but 'the young bee is a poor follower and must practice following dancers before it can accurately perceive another bee's dance.'" After doing this research, it made me wonder where the Hmong are heading. It could be that sometimes the elderly are losing control in their families.

Since so many Hmong have resettled in this country it is interesting to see the changes in Hmong marriage customs. For example, one Hmong couple, married for just one month, had their marriage annulled after sending the invitations to their relatives and leaders all over the United States. This is the first time this has happened with the Hmong.
In this study it seems clear that the elderly will have to deal with a lot of social changes regarding marriage customs for their teenagers. Here are three major directions which Hmong leaders may choose to take:

A. Make the changes which influence the Hmong teenagers understandable to the older people.

B. The power of the parents, go-betweens and clan leaders must be maintained.

C. The behavior of the Hmong teenagers should be controlled by the traditional Hmong authority.

On preliminary analysis of the bride price in American dollars, it should be set at $1,000 for both the educated and the uneducated. Hmong marriage means to be able to have a family, and also good relationships with the other clan, if you are their son-in-law or daughter-in-law. The big issue is not to just get married and gain a wife or husband. The point is to develop new relationships with your new parents, brothers, sisters, uncles, cousins, and so on. That is the basis on which Hmong social customs have been practiced generation after generation. Divorce not only separates you from your wife or husband, it also separates you from all of your relationships with their clan. The Hmong say "Choj lov kev tu." In English this means, "if the bridge is broken down, the road cannot be travelled."

NOTES

Special thanks to Dr. Kenneth Root for help in reorganizing and editing this paper; and to Katrinka Sieber for typing the conference version.

1. Barney (1957) discusses a practice he calls trial marriage which is similar, but by our information there is much variation from one region to another and many Hmong parents will not approve of sexual relations before marriage. [ed.]
REFERENCES


Kao Vang
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APPENDIX

List of Names

Tub Liaj Lus — Brothers who traveled to Heaven to get the marriage customs from God.

Ntruv Me

Kub Npaib Txias (gold - 3 grams) — Traditional bride price

Nyiav Npaib Lag (silver - 3 ounces)

Yeu Txis (father) — Parents of Tub Liaj Lus and Ntruv Me

Pus Txis (mother)

Zaj Txooj — Songs of the Dragon Flood

Poj Cuag (chimpanzee) — Animals caught by Tub Liaj Lus and Ntruv Me to be demonstrators of the marriage customs and after which the sister and bride are named.

Poj Nyaj (monkey)

Niam Taim Yuab (sister)

Nkauj Nyab (bride)

Poj Cuas Ob Nus Muag — Adam and Eve, brother and sister, marriage

Nkauj Iab Nraug Oo — Death (Nkauj Iab Nraug Oog and Poj Cuas Ob Nus Muag are the same except when it comes to marriage and death)

Nkauj Ntsuab (woman) — First man and woman on earth

SisNab (man)

Ntuj Thsa Teb Nqhuab — Place that is like a desert (possibly Mesopotamia)

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Ntuj Daus Xib Tes —— Place of cold and snow
Daus Npu

Ntuj Khaib Huab —— Place that is dark six
months and daylight six
months

Muam Nkaug Lig Tes —— Mongolia
TRADITIONAL HMONG BIRTH CUSTOMS:
A HISTORICAL STUDY

Gayle Siscard Potter and Alice Whiren

The family system surrounding pregnancy and child-
birth that is traditional in the Hmong culture is so
unlike the cultural traditions in American society that
barriers to understanding inevitably arise as this pop-
ulation from Southeast Asia is transported into an
American milieu. Childbearing is integral to Hmong
family life, being founded on concepts of healthful
inter-dependence of household members. In contrast,
childbearing in the United States is surrounded with
the perception of illness. The pregnant woman is
isolated from the family and firmly encapsulated within
the modern medical hospital setting. The intent of
this study is to examine traditional Hmong birthing
practices based on informants available in one midwest-
ern U.S. city.

Savina (1924) and Bernatzik (1970) did not focus
on the intergenerational aspects of the Hmong birthing
system. Such a study is significant today since the
Hmong society is in the throes of cross-cultural adapta-
tion that makes the ramifications of changing birthing
practices especially relevant.

METHODOLOGY

The Lansing, Michigan, Hmong Community was the
major source of information for the study. An inter-
view schedule was prepared to elicit information of
specifics of the Hmong peoples' conceptions of reproduc-
tion, pregnancy, the birth event, familial support sys-
tems, post-partum practices, and physical or social
irregularities. The principal informants were 23-year-
old Chia Xiong and his 19-year-old wife Chue Lee.
Three one hour long interviews were conducted with the
Xiong's during April and May of 1981, following the
birth of the son, Houa William, in March of 1981.
Additional information was gathered in an interview with Mrs. Njua Yang, the 48-year-old medicine woman of the Lansing community. Also present at the time of Mrs. Yang's interview was Fa Tong, elder of the Lansing Hmong and 23 other members of the Lansing Hmong community. Observational data were obtained during the hospital birth of Houa William and during the traditional naming ceremony that was held for him in May of 1981.

CONCEPTS OF REPRODUCTION

Marriage

Marriage is essential in the Hmong scheme of life. It is governed by a strict set of rules, regulations and taboos. There is a very strong taboo against relationships between brothers, sisters and parallel cousins. Cross cousins are considered especially suitable marriage partners and are most often favored by the parents. The incest taboo is so strong that social contact between the parties is considered a violation. Furthermore, looking into the face of a forbidden person or drinking in his presence is also considered taboo. Breaking the incest taboo is a major social disgrace and often leads to ostracism or expulsion. The only taboo directly associated with sexual relations is the one that bans premarital sexual relations within the home. It is said to offend the household spirits and there are strong fears concerning the manifestations of their wrath. Beyond this, the punishment of the offense is left for the spirits to administer.

Hmong boys tend to marry at about age 16. Girls are generally 20 or more as it is felt that girls are not physically strong enough to bear the rigors of childbirth until they have passed their 20th year because each would be expected to bear 10 children.

Divorce is not unknown to the Hmong, though it is by far the exception rather than the rule. An indisputable request for divorce is made when the wife remains barren for a period of one year. Divorce for this reason is not mandatory, however, and couples may choose
to adopt a child from a large family in an attempt to alleviate this situation in the eyes of the spirits.

A child born out-of-wedlock is an accepted member of the community. There is no translation for the word bastard in the Hmong language. If a woman becomes pregnant and is unable to secure a marriage, she is shamed. If the man refuses to marry the girl, he may go to a lawyer and negotiate a financial settlement. If he does not come to an agreement with the woman, he may be jailed and fined. Depending on the circumstances, the woman may also be subject to a jail sentence. When the child is named, he is given a first name and a family name. The family name that he is given is not the same as that of either parent but is selected from a limited array of appropriate Hmong surnames.

Abortion is frowned on but not unheard of. Most abortions occur prior to the end of the first trimester. The most common method of abortion calls for ingesting a herbal tea that is generally, but not always, successful.

Conception

The Hmong understand that sexual intercourse is necessary for a pregnancy to occur. Although parents discourage premarital sex, it is extremely common. Once a pregnancy occurs, a marriage is negotiated as rapidly as possible.

While the Hmong understand the basic biology of pregnancy, they tend to give greater consideration to the spiritual aspects. Take, for example, the following interview with 23-year-old Chia Xiong following the birth of his first child.

Interviewer: Where does the baby come from? Is the baby a spirit? Is the baby an ancestor?

Chia: No.

Interviewer: Where does the baby come from?

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Chia: When the baby is born so women (only) say the God bring the baby too.

Interviewer: Where was the baby before he came here?

Chia: We don't know.

Gestation

Hmong theories of gestation are limited. The baby does not begin in a smaller version of the human form. It changes during gestation but they cannot describe how. The man who cares for the cemetery knows more about gestation than any other person in the community, according to my informants. He is required to bury all abortions (unless concealed), stillbirths and miscarriages. He must also cut open the abdomen of a pregnant woman who had died so that the mother and child may be buried separately.

Beginnings of Life

When Njua Yang was asked when an embryo/fetus becomes a person, those present began talking and gesturing at once in considerable excitement. Voices were louder than normal conversational tones. At this point, the interview had gone on about 20 minutes. Occasionally, two answers and an additional comment were received from the group. Only married adults took part in the discussion. When the answer was finally given, it was stated that:

The men say it is not a person until it comes out.

The women say before, when it is growing.

A quiet male voice in the background added,

You see we really don't know for sure.
Concepts of Contraception

Contraception is unknown to the Hmong. For the most part, the general attitude concerning the desirability of children and the status given a large family outweighs the need for birth control.

PREGNANCY

Prenatal Care

Birth is a natural event. There are no designated midwives in the Hmong society but medicine women are available to take charge if a physical problem occurs. In most pregnancies, the mother-to-be carries on much as before with a slightly slackened pace. There are no taboos about food and no special foods are introduced into her diet.

The most common situation that requires the medicine woman's presence is back pain. If the pregnant woman complains about pain in the lower back or abdomen the medicine woman comes and positions the baby. It is believed that such a condition is caused by stretching or reaching. In many cases, the actual treatment is an external cephalic version.

Birth Teaching

About one month before the first child is due, the husband's mother and father instruct the prospective parents concerning childbirth and infant care. The session is the most formal teaching situation in the Hmong culture. The couple receives specific instruction about the birth event including: birthing position, the catch, procedures for a difficult birth, and expectations of the husband. They also receive rules for the confinement of the wife and the food taboos that accompany it.

If the husband's parents are unavailable, this role will be assumed by older, married relatives in the area or by the medicine woman and her husband. They
then assume the role of parents during the actual birth.

THE BIRTH

 Definition of the Event

Birth in the Hmong society is a family affair. Both husband and wife play an important role as do the husband's parents. Any married relative, with the exception of nursing mothers, may attend. Unless the labor is extremely long and arduous, only the husband and his parents are required to be present. Tradition has it, however, that young, unmarried girls hover outside the windows and doors to follow the events and to keep the village informed of the progress.

Birth Attendants and Support System

The husband provides the basic support unit. If it is the couple's first child, attendance by his parents or their representatives is mandatory. The mother-in-law is often requested to boil water for eggs that will be fed to the mother immediately following birth. Unless the birth becomes complicated no other need be present.

If complications arise the support system swings into action. It has four components that are characterized by the length of labor.

1. When it begins to appear that the labor is not proceeding smoothly, the other relatives of the household are called into the room. At this point the ban against older, unmarried family members is lifted. Young children and especially nursing mothers are excluded. It is felt that the presence of a nursing mother is extremely harmful, even to be feared.

2. As tension increases, a male family member recites a special chant. Additional relatives
may join the group at this time. Because the traditional house is very large (26,000 sq. ft.) this may include large numbers of people. A group of 30 or more is not uncommon.

3. The medicine woman is called to administer an herbal tea which is believed to hasten the delivery. Her presence is not requested until the labor approaches 24 hours. If birth has not occurred after two or three days, the medicine woman is asked to attempt manually to stimulate the birth.

4. Medicine bowls are filled with water and placed around the room. Prayers are said over them. The group in the room grows and tension is reflected among them.

Traditionally, the avenues for support have become exhausted at this point. The woman who has been unable to deliver inevitably dies; modern medical alternatives have largely been unavailable.

Onset of Labor and Normal Birth

At the onset of labor, the woman hastens to return home (or to a cousin's home). It is important to reach home due to the fear that unfriendly spirits will harm her in other surroundings. The mother is allowed to give birth in the bedroom of her husband's house or in any of his cousin's homes. Any other home would be considered dangerous because the spirits would reject the woman. This may explain why Sue Julian (American refugee sponsor) felt that many Hmong women concealed their labor in an attempt to give birth at home rather than be transported to a hospital (Interview March 8, 1981).

Beginning with the first contraction, the woman is expected to observe the post-partum taboos. Especially significant is the taboo against touching or eating anything cold. All water must be boiled and served steaming hot including anything used for washing. Eating a solid food is forbidden.
Once in the bedroom, the woman's husband is expected to be in attendance. He directs anyone else that may enter unless this is the first child. If such is the case, he shares the responsibility with his parents (or their representatives).

The mother lies on the bed while in early labor but moves to a squatting position on a small stool beside the bed for the actual delivery. The husband assumes a position behind his wife with his arms locked under her breast.

There are no established rules about who will catch or wash the baby. Most often it is the father or grandparents, but other relatives may perform the task. The catch is a blind catch because of the taboo against looking at the woman's legs.

As soon as the child presents itself, the umbilical cord is cut. Traditionally, it was cut with two sharp pieces of bamboo. Mrs. Yang said that in the past few years heated scissors have been used (Interview May 14, 1981).

The baby is washed and wrapped in a large piece of cloth. If clothes were prepared for both sexes, the baby would be dressed. If not, which is often the case, the baby would remain wrapped in the cloth until the father has an opportunity to get to a market where he can purchase new clothes for the child. Having clothes ready for the child is not taboo, but they must be sex appropriate and are generally purchased after the fact.

The wait for the placenta begins. If the placenta does not present itself, the medicine woman is called in to administer a hot drink that is believed to hasten expulsion. If this method fails, one of the relatives is asked to try to pull the placenta from the mother.

Bernatzik reported that:

The placenta and umbilical cord are preserved in a bamboo which, in the case of a boy, is buried next to the middle post of the house;
in the case of a girl, under the bed of the parents; always about three-quarters of a meter deep. When I inquired as to the reasons for this distinction I was told: A girl leaves the house when she marries and from then on belongs to the other family; a boy, however, stays in the house and augments the prosperity of the family. My Meau (a historical term for Hmong) informants did not know why the afterbirth is dealt with in such a manner. They also believed that it would not matter if an animal were to devour the afterbirth, for an evil spirit would certainly not do this, since it would not taste good to him.

(Bernatzik 1970: 75)

Although Bernatzik's information is relatively old, my Hmong informants agreed with his comments in their entirety.

Following disposal of the placenta and umbilical cord, the father offers prayers to the spirits and the mother is given boiled eggs and salt to eat. In some villages she may be required to lie in front of a hot fire for as long as 25 days, inhaling fumes from boiling water and drinking large quantities of herb tea.

The father hurries outside to invite his friends to celebrate. The celebration is largely impromptu and it is not considered an affront for others to carry on with their work rather than participate.

**Breech Birth and Caesarean Section**

The position of the baby within the womb is considered to be within the realm of the gods. If a baby is breech and the mother has lived a pure life, then she will feel pain and the medicine woman will be called upon to position the baby. If the woman has committed an offense against the gods, she will feel no pain and the mother will be expected to shamefully undergo a breech birth or die in childbirth.

When discussing Caesarean section and his wife's long labor Chia said:
Chia: I said I want the doctor to cut out and take the baby but she said 'No, I wait until I die.'

Interviewer: In your country do they cut and take the baby out?

Chia: A few years before we come to your country and some American people came to build a hospital. They have American doctors to cut out babies... American doctor.

Interviewer: They know how to do it. But your people don't know how to do it?

Chia: No.

(Taped Interview April 25, 1981)

Physical Deformities

While everyone in the room denied ever having seen a child with a birth defect (except cleft palate), heads nodded in agreement when Chia translated Njua Yang's comment. "A deformed baby comes from the bad thing that the mother and father do before the baby gets born." This attitude is similar to the attitude about out-of-wedlock children: the guilt is placed on the parents. The child is not ostracized for what the parents have done. It is believed that the gods richly bless the child who has been placed in this intermediary position and marriage to a deformed or out-of-wedlock child is a good marriage.

POST PARTUM PRACTICES

Seclusion

The seclusion period lasts 30 days. It is expected that all women that have given birth will observe the rituals surrounding the seclusion period. That includes mothers of stillborn children and women who have exper-
ienced miscarriages even at the early stages. At the end of the seclusion period, the woman resumes normal daily activities including work, sex and diet.

Taboos During Labor and Seclusion

The diet of the woman becomes closely regulated beginning with her first contraction. Of all the customs surrounding birth, this is the one most strictly observed by the people studied. Njua Yang listed the foods of the 'approved' list. They include: boiling water for drinking (it may contain black pepper), salt, rice, eggs, chicken, noodles (after 10 days) (Interview May 14, 1981). All other food is exclusively forbidden. After 30 days the taboos are lifted and the mother is allowed to eat anything she wishes.

Other taboos include the taboo against touching or ingesting anything cold beginning with the onset of labor and ending with the 30-day seclusion period. There are also strong fears concerning mother's milk. Young children and nursing mothers are forbidden to have contact with the mother's milk. Chia explained:

Chia: If a little child drinks from his mother's breast after another baby is born to her, it is very, very bad. The sky will get dark and the thunder is noisy. Lightening comes. The mother and the child die.

Interviewer: What will happen to the baby?

Chia: Oh, he will die too. He has no mother so he cannot eat. He become very hungry and die.

(Interview April 25, 1981)

The Naming Ceremony

On the day the birth occurs, the father spends time in celebration with his neighbors but he is expected to be considering plans for the naming ceremony. The focus of the birth now switches to the father.
For three days the household is engaged in preparing for the ceremony. Hmong men do all the cooking for celebrations. The women are allowed to help by carrying water and gathering firewood, but they are not allowed to participate in preparation of the food.

On the day of the celebration, the new father goes from house to house. He speaks to a male member of the household and invites his family to the celebration. Men, women and children are invited to the party. In fact, more men attend than women. Chia was asked what causes that situation. He replied, "Because of the way we value women" (Interview April 25, 1981).

The shaman visits the house early on the day of the naming ceremony. He chooses the person to be the child's godfather. He then goes to the outside of the house and exerts the spirits on behalf of the child. Inside the family carries on the preparations for the party.

When all is in readiness (usually in late afternoon) the father sends runners to the homes to call the community members to the ceremony. There is much talking and laughing preceding the ceremony. The men and boys sit in the main room. Any women, girls or babies in attendance sit in an adjoining room.

The father begins the ceremony by calling the men to the table. They stand at one side and the mother, father and baby stand at the other. The village elder or shaman solemnly thanks the spirits for the birth of the child. Strings about six inches long have been prepared and are passed to each man.

Once strings are passed around, the elder starts the ceremony by tying a string on the baby's wrist and expressing his wish for the child. Soon everyone is tying strings on wrists and expressing their wishes. Many people may be tying strings at the same time so the room becomes filled with dozens of wishes expressed simultaneously. The tone is cheerful. The father, mother and baby are the major focus of the event but strings may also be tied to the wrists of other close family members.
The table is set with the celebration food. Also on the table is a platter containing two cooked chickens, a boiled egg and a small candle. The informants explained the presence of the chickens and the egg as representative of the mother and father and the new life of the child. The candle represents the spirits.

Guests line up at the table in order of importance. The village elders and shaman are first. Revered male relatives are second, the other men in attendance stand in line behind them. Male family members complete the line. When the men have been served, the children are given bowls of food. If there is food left over, the women are allowed to eat. They take their plates to a separate room. Sometimes gifts, especially money, are presented to the father in honor of the baby. The party ends promptly when the food is consumed.

SUMMARY

The Whole Family has Important Roles Surrounding Childbirth in the Hmong Group

The paternal grandparents assume the primary role for socializing the new family. They instruct the husband and wife in childbirth procedures including the rules governing taboos and assist at the first birth. It is frequently the paternal grandmother who is given the honor of naming the child.

As was previously noted, the father assumes the role of a director shortly after the labor commences and unless it is the first birth, he takes charge of the comings and goings in the mother's room. The father physically and emotionally supports the mother. He often catches and washes the baby and presents the new child to the relatives.

Following the birth, the center of attention becomes exclusively the father. The father enters the village and receives congratulations. He also participates in impromptu celebrations before preparing for the naming ceremony.
Implications for Hmong Childbirth in America

The barriers to intercultural adaptation are many; the childbirth process has many ritualistic components. It is necessary to identify those areas within the process that pose potential conflict situations with American traditions.

The whole issue of the Hmong family-centered approach to childbirth poses a multiplicity of problems when countered with the American attitude that childbirth belongs to the medical establishment. The diminished role of the father/husband becomes a viable issue as well as the abandonment of intergenerational relationships that had previously been fostered by birth teaching and the role assumed by the father's parents during childbirth.

Such matters as the position taken during birth and the practice of removing a child from a woman's abdomen after she has died in childbirth for separate burial as well as the opposition to Caesarean section raise additional points for consideration.

Attitudes about out-of-wedlock pregnancies and the ramifications of the introduction of reliable forms of contraception are matters of social consequence. Other social issues include the traditional methods of dealing with long, difficult pregnancies and the socially defined support systems for both new parents. Not to be ignored are the post-partum restrictions on movement, food and drink for the mother. The various spiritual factors surrounding the mother's milk remain highly significant issues.

The foregoing discussion suggests that historical Hmong birth practices are essential to maintaining traditional Hmong society. The implications of adjusting to American birthing practices are obvious. The question remains to be examined: How will traditional birthing patterns be modified and what types of conflict situations and resolutions will arise in the process?
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INTRODUCTION

The resettlement of the Lao Hmong refugees in the United States has created many problems, both for themselves and for the agencies concerned with their adjustment. The most salient of these problems is the satisfaction of basic material needs—housing, health care, education, and employment—as is the case with all Southeast Asian refugee peoples. But these problems have proven even more intractable with the Hmong, owing to the relatively wide disparity between their traditional way of life and that of their receiving society. Even the minimal linguistic, occupational, and larger social skills necessary for adjustment to this society are largely lacking in a people whose background centered on an independent tribal existence in the mountains of northern Laos, isolated from any effective, extensive contact with the more Westernized socioeconomic mainstream of the Lao lowlands and from any knowledge of American culture, save for their piecemeal acquaintance with U.S. military and AID specialists during the war.

The most immediate challenge facing the Hmong refugees, then, is gaining the linguistic and occupational skills needed to achieve economic self-sufficiency in their new society. In this enterprise they are aided by government and private agencies, who have established language and vocational training programs on their behalf. In addition, the Hmong leaders themselves, far from being disinterested in the fate of their people, have established an organized, systematic approach of their own to meeting
this challenge, on which I have reported elsewhere (Scott 1979).

But even more perplexing to the Hmong than having to learn English and American occupational skills is the dilemma of change in their traditional, largely religious, view of the world. As Geertz (1968) has argued in his analysis of religious change in Indonesia and Morocco, the crucial problem that needs to be understood in the process of "modernization"—and modernization, on top of adjustment, is what the Hmong are facing here—is the "crisis... generated in the internal confrontation of established forms of faith with altered conditions of life..." (p. 21).

As in most societies not yet completely infused with Western rationalism, the Hmong traditionally conceived of their existence primarily in religious terms. The web of religious belief and sentiment provided a conceptual and emotional framework that tied the individual to his environment, both natural and social, providing explanations of and guides for interaction with that environment. Geertz has further written of this dual, integrating function of religion, in general, and of the consequences of change for it:

It (religion) draws its persuasiveness out of a reality it itself defines. The source of any creed's vitality... lies in the fact that it pictures the ultimate structure of existence in such a way that the events of everyday life seem repeatedly to confirm it. It is when this magical circle is broken and religious concepts lose their air of simple realism, when the world as experienced and the world as imagined no longer seem to be mere elucidations of one another, that perplexities ensue (1968: 39).

The Hmong's abrupt relocation, first to the refugee camps in Laos and Thailand, and then to an extremely alien way of life here, has thus not only
meant a change in social and physical environments, with the material problems of adjustment resulting, but it has also meant that the strands of the semantically interconnecting religious web have either been cut or stretched to the point of dubious utility. The result has been a questioning of faith, not a wholesale abandonment of it, to be sure, but the appearance of doubt where before there was certainty. In order to address the question of how this doubt is expressed, as well as to examine its consequences for the traditional Hmong religion, we must begin with a more detailed description of that religion, before it was disrupted by war and relocation.

THE TRADITIONAL HMONG RELIGIOUS SYSTEM

The traditional Hmong religion comprised essentially three interrelated elements: animism, ancestor worship, and shamanism. According to this religious view, most events in the world, both human and otherwise, were ultimately governed by a variety of supernatural agents. Spirits (dab) were pervasive in the environment, those of a familiar or "tame" nature (dab nyeg) residing in houses, parts of the village, and cultivated fields, and those of a dubious or "wild" nature (dab qus) existing in certain trees, rivers, rocks, caves, and animals of the forest, as well as in a metaphysical realm mirroring that of the living. Providing an extension of human society in this transcendent realm were the ancestral spirits (dab txwvkoob), who, together with the spirits, had to be propitiated with offerings (txi dab) if the conditions of life over which they held sway were to remain favorable to the people.

A link between the supernatural and the world of the living was provided by the concept of transmutable souls and spirits, human souls (pilig) leaving, or being lured away from, their corporeal enclosures for a sojourn among the spirits, and the spirits descending from their realm to possess or otherwise harass human bodies. Most human fortune and misfortune in the natural world, and, for that matter, most phenomena of any kind, would be explained in terms of the ac-
tions of these supernatural agents—actions deriving either from their own capricious intentions or as responses to human action. All human illness, for instance, was explained either directly by soul-loss or demonic possession, or indirectly, by an ill-advised or inopportune disturbance of a spirit's abode, or the wrathful punishment of an ancestral spirit for social impropriety.

Mediating between the human and spiritual realms was the shaman (txiv neeb), who, aided by his complement of spirit helpers, treated illness by retrieving peripatetic or stolen souls, exorcizing evil spirits, and soothing with sacrifice the piqued moral sensibility of an ancestor or the violated privacy of a local spirit. But the shaman's responsibilities extended beyond his role as curer; he acted on behalf of his fellow villagers in all matters concerning the supernatural by discerning through divination the attitudes and intentions of ancestors and spirits and by recommending and performing the sacrificial offerings necessary to maintain their favor.

The traditional Hmong religious system, then, provided its adherents with a cognitive and affective map that not only delineated and elucidated important features of their environment, but also furnished a system of routes for best negotiating that environment. What, then, has happened to this animistically interweaving world view now that its adherents are living in American urban and suburban environments?

**EXPRESSION OF SPIRITUAL DOUBT IN THE SAN DIEGO HMONG COMMUNITY**

We will take as our case the San Diego Hmong community and leave for now other areas as probable but hypothetical extensions of this case. From field work conducted in this community it appears that the relocation of the traditional Hmong religious system into an incompatible environment (Geertz's "magic circle" being broken in the process) has entailed (1) the questioning of belief, much of which now seems painfully inappropriate in an environment
with which it is no longer resonant, and (2) the abandonment of ritual in all but a few of the most conservative families as the main context through which belief is symbolically expressed and reinforced. In either case, the result has been to engender an increasing amount of spiritual doubt in the minds of the believers.

The greatest doubt surrounds belief in the efficacy of spirits, primarily because their existence, compared to that of the ancestral souls, had the greatest conceptual hypostatization, most of them being grounded in specific physical components of the environment. Without that environment, belief in spirits is therefore difficult to maintain. How can house spirits exist, for example, without the interior posts, beams, and firepits in which they resided in Laos? But more importantly, as one informant put it, "These houses are not ours. We didn't build them, so there is nothing sacred in them for us."

The existence of spirits in the outside world is also held in question. While the few bilingual, Western-educated Hmong categorically deny the existence of local spirits, the majority of the community is more equivocal, reasoning that since spirits were ubiquitous in Laos, it is possible that spirits exist here as well. But, whether or not they exist, one thing is fairly certain: (to paraphrase several informants' statements) "They are not our spirits; we don't know them, nor do they know us. So how can they affect us, and us them?" 4

In addition, for the younger, school-aged generation, and for the few already acculturated adults, Western rationalism has replaced, or is replacing, the traditional supernatural framework as their main explanatory and motivational principle: a dedicated, disciplined commitment to study and work will lead to success in school and employment, which, in turn, will provide the income for a more economically secure life. A lack of commitment will of course have the opposite result. Successes or failures along the way that cannot be explained in these rational terms are attributed to good or bad luck, chance, or coincidence. But for
the rest of the community, this typically Western explanatory framework has little meaning, the extent to which it does depending mainly on the length of residence in the United States. The vast majority of the population, then, is left to struggle in a world fraught with ambiguity and uncertainty, no longer convinced that their path will be guided by spirit helpers or hinderers but not yet able to accept the idea that they can or should walk it on their own.

Moreover, for all but the oldest and most conservative people, an element of doubt also enters into the belief in the ability of the ancestors to help them with problems peculiar to their new environment. That is, in Laos the ancestors possessed the greatest wisdom of how the living should conduct their lives and were the ultimate arbiters in all situations of dispute, uncertainty, or misconduct. But can their jurisdiction extend to an environment that they had never experienced while among the living? They may continue to hold authority over those traditional behavioral patterns still maintained (e.g., respect of parental authority, deference to elders in general, clan exogamy), but what of interaction with Americans in public, at work, or at school? What of problems in language, shopping, banking, and knowing how to obtain financial or legal assistance?

Further restricting the range and strength of beliefs concerning spirits and ancestors has been the removal of much of the associated ritual through which the beliefs were reinforced by public expression. This curtailment of ritual is based on three factors. First of all, even if the sacrificial animals—primarily chickens and pigs—necessary to secure the blessings or forgiveness of the spirits or ancestors were readily available, their sacrifice would be extremely incompatible with and difficult to perform in the Hmong's present apartment complex environment. Secondly, even without the sacrificial animals, the cost of the special food and drink required for ancestral offerings and for the large number of requisite guests is prohibitive to the majority of the population, whose primary means of income is the barely adequate monthly welfare payment.
Thirdly, most of the Hmong fear that the loud chanting and playing of instruments (to invoke the spirits or ancestors), much of which should be performed out of doors or at least in an open doorway, along with the associated behavior, would invite derision or even complaints to the authorities from their American neighbors. "It would be too embarrassing;" "People would laugh at us;" "Someone might call police" are common responses to my questions concerning the absence of ritual.

It has long been an anthropological truism that religious beliefs are reinforced through their symbolic expression in ritual. The self-evident quality of the beliefs, in other words, is renewed and restrengthened when they are publicly conveyed through powerful symbols manipulated by religious authorities during ritual performances. It would follow, then, that when a religious system, especially one tightly integrated through ritual such as the Hmong's, begins to lose its ritual woof, the belief warp must also begin to unravel. In the minds of the Hmong, this reason for the weakening of their beliefs is expressed very practically: in the words of one informant, "If we can't call our spirits and offer them food, they're not going to come to help us."

Finally, as uncertainty has infused the traditional belief in the efficacy of spirits and ancestors, so too has the role of the shaman, which is directly tied to these beliefs, been severely curtailed. Without the spirit and ancestral dimension, at least as it traditionally existed, what use is the shaman, whose main task had been to intercede in behalf of his people in their interaction with this dimension? Having a further limiting effect on the shaman's status has been the increasing acceptance, or at least, attempts to accept, Western medical theories of disease causation and treatment, which stand in considerable opposition to the traditional Hmong theories of soul-loss, demonic possession, and shamanistic treatment.

In sum, this dislocation of reality defining religion and religion supporting reality has resulted in both a chal-
lenging of belief and in a severing away of everyday public ritual; the ritually denuded and environmentally inappropriate beliefs are in turn becoming increasingly infused with doubt. What, then, has been the effect of this disturbing crisis in faith on the traditional Hmong religious system? To help understand this transformation, let us examine the Hmong New Year Celebration held in San Diego in December, 1979, and compare it to the traditional ceremony as it was commonly performed in Laos.

THE 1979 SAN DIEGO NEW YEAR CELEBRATION

Of the various farming related ceremonies in the Hmong annual lunar cycle, the New Year Celebration (noj peb caug) was the most elaborate and important. It began on the first day of the new moon in the twelfth month, which usually coincided with the end of the padi harvest, and lasted from four to seven days. At this time all work would be ceased and lineage members who had established satellite farming camps would return to the main village to begin preparations for the celebration. Standing as a spiritual and material marker between the old year and the new, the ceremony was aimed in general at removing the evil influences that had accumulated during the previous year and insuring an adequate supply of good fortune for the next. All of the specific rituals performed during the celebration involved expiation, supplication, and sacrifice intended to reassemble the ancestral souls and familiar spirits back at the village and to secure their spiritual assistance for the coming year. New Year's also served as a holiday away from the otherwise constant routine of work; games were played by children and adults alike, horse exhibitions and bull fights were held, large quantities of special foods and maize whiskey were consumed, young couples could openly flirt, free from the otherwise vigilant eyes of their parents, and dancing and singing were enjoyed by all.

The San Diego Hmong community's New Year Celebration of 1979 was held over the weekend of December 15-16—four days before the new moon on the 19th.
The celebration had to be held early and restricted to the two days of the weekend because a large segment of the community either attends school (primarily) or works during the week.

The main part of the celebration, containing the ritual components, was held inside the large recreation hall of the local neighborhood park, which had been rented by the Hmong's self-help organization with funds collected from the community at large. This segment lasted from about 2:00 to 5:00 in the afternoon of the first day and was preceded on that morning and followed on the next by traditional songs and games performed out on the park grounds.

The recreation hall was arranged with rows of metal folding chairs facing an open end of the room, where an elevated bandstand had been placed, complete with amplification equipment, microphones, electric guitars, and a drumset. Between the bandstand and the seating area was an open space covered by a piece of carpet. On the wall directly behind the bandstand was hung a large white banner proclaiming in silver lettering, "Happy New Year" in English, Lao, and Hmong. Large panels decorated with the women's colorful needlework (paj ntaub) had been placed on either side of the banner. A group of young unmarried women clad in traditional costumes and holding ornate silver-plated collection bowls stood at the entrance to greet everyone arriving, accept donations, and hand out ribbon and paper pin-on flowers inscribed with "Happy New Year." All American guests were given a program written in English and ushered by a second group of hostesses to their seats in the "orchestra section." As the audience filtered in, the young Hmong musicians tuned their electric guitars and then began to play Hmong and Lao "pop" tunes. There was a bustle of activity "off stage left" (in a room adjoining the hall) as performers readied themselves for the forthcoming show.

After all the seats were taken and people standing along the walls had settled, the "Master of Ceremonies" took one of the microphones and asked
that the audience rise for the playing of the national anthems. A recorded version of the U.S. anthem was played first, followed by the band's rendition of the Lao anthem. After the guests had retaken their seats, he introduced the community's primary leader, who delivered a welcoming speech to both his fellow Hmong and their American friends.

The "MC" then announced the next part of the program: the "Culture Shows." By way of introduction he compared the Hmong New Year celebration with the American Christmas: "People save money to buy things to make their family and friends happy." He went on to say that the shows to follow were important to his people "so that they don't forget the way they used to live."

The culture shows opened with two traditional Hmong songs performed by the band—one "to put the old year to sleep," and the other "to wake up the new year." According to informants, these songs also opened the traditional New Year ceremony, although they were performed on traditional instruments and sung collectively by all the villagers. In the San Diego version, only a few Hmong in the audience openly sang along, with most of the others silently mouthing the words. After the songs, more people were admitted to the hall, which had already been full and was now overflowing.

The first show was a presentation of a traditional shamanistic curing performance (ua neeb kho). This particular routine, as it was commonly enacted in Laos, involved the shaman going into trance and invoking the aid of his spirit familiars to retrieve a lost or stolen soul, whose absence had caused illness in the body of its owner. To invite possession by his spirit helpers, he would first place on an altar cups of tea and burning incense candles, sometimes accompanied by a sacrificed chicken. Seated on a bench in front of the altar, with his eyes covered by a cloth so that his "sight" would remain focused on the spirits, he would intone a request for his familiars to possess him, pumping his arms and legs.
up and down and weaving the upper part of his body back and forth while striking a rattle against his thigh. This syncopated, rhythmic movement, often accompanied by the sound of a gong struck by an assistant, was intended to represent the riding of a galloping horse. As the shaman fell into trance and was possessed one by one by his spirit helpers, his galloping movements would increase in speed and intensity. Once united, his soul and its spirit companions would "move out," posse style, into the supernatural realm to find and retrieve the victim's soul from its demon abductor. During the "chase," the shaman's behavior would become increasingly frenzied as he and his spirit deputies, speaking through him, discussed strategy and probable outcome. When the evil spirit's abode was finally located, the shaman would leap up, often onto the top of the bench, and enter either into symbolic combat or negotiation with the spirit for the release of the captive soul, at which time he would often have to be restrained by an assistant lest he injure himself. During the course of negotiations, that being the case, the shaman would often report back to the victim's assembled relatives that a pig would have to be sacrificed to gain the release of his soul. This routine might have lasted from one to several hours, depending on the strength and intransigence of the demon, and was accompanied by acts of divination to aid in the search. At the end of the ordeal, the shaman would regain consciousness with the help of an assistant's massaging. He would then formally thank his spirit helpers for their assistance, and the victim's family would be left to await expectantly the outcome on his illness.

The San Diego New Year's version of this paradigmatic shamanistic performance was similar only in outward appearance, and even then, in a restricted sense. The performer was dressed in the shaman's loosely fitting black shirt and pants and was accompanied by three young male assistants wearing semi-traditional costumes. Taking their places on the carpeted "stage" in front of the bandstand, the troupe first bowed to the audience, and the assistants, looking as if they
were about to burst into a fit of giggling, then turned and kowtowed to the shaman. Also with an amused expression on his face, the shaman turned and bowed to his altar, which consisted of a metal T.V. table with a tin can on top wrapped in gold paper and holding burning incense sticks. After some barely audible chanting, he pulled the cloth down over his face, sat down on a piano bench, and began the galloping routine, which never came close to reaching the intensity of the true trance-induced performance. This mimetic behavior lasted for only about one minute and was accompanied by the narration of the MC, who explained that the shaman, using "black magic," was off "soul searching" and that "a normal person can't say the words a shaman says during a trance." The shaman was then "brought back" to consciousness by one of his assistants, who gingerly shook him by his shoulders. Their performance ended, the shaman and his assistants, all grinning widely, turned and bowed to the applauding audience.

The next routine represented a variant of the "world renewal" ritual that initiated the traditional New Year Celebration. In Laos, this particular ritual (lwm qaib) was performed separately by the members of each lineage represented in a village and was focused on a small tree brought in from the forest and stuck into the ground. One end of a rope plaited from reeds was tied near the top of the tree and the other was either held by one of the participants or tied to a rock. As the lineage elder stood next to the trunk holding a live chicken, all the lineage members would pass in a circle close to the tree and around the lower end of the rope, three times clockwise and four times counterclockwise. During the clockwise rotation, the leader would entice with special chanting all the evil and misfortune that had accumulated in his people during the previous year into the chicken. When the direction was reversed, he would supplicate the lineage spirits to watch over his people and ensure good fortune for them throughout the new year. He would then take the chicken far into the forest and cut its throat, thereby letting out the evil that had collected in its blood during the ritual.
The "tree" involved in the San Diego rendition of this ritual consisted of a rough hewn wooden pole stained green, with a eucalyptus branch attached to the top. The rope was plaited from green ribbons, and the loose end was held by a middle-aged man dressed in a suit. All the other participants wore semi-traditional costumes. Fourteen young unmarried adults, seven of each sex, played the part of the lineage members; the part of the lineage elder was taken by an old man. These performers did not in fact represent a single lineage. As the elder held up a live chicken and began to chant, the members started to circumambulate beneath the rope, hesitatingly at first, but then more assuredly. The solemnity of their downcast faces was belied by an occasional amused expression. The young men carried either traditional panpipes or "farming implements" (local gardening hoes and brush knives), both of which were meant to represent the agricultural meaning of this opening ritual of the New Year Celebration. When it came time to reverse directions, there was some momentary confusion, which was cleared up by the man holding the rope. After the last counterclockwise rotation, the participants stopped and looked expectantly toward the elder, who was still holding up the cock and chanting. To be standing "on stage" with nothing more to do seemed to make the young performers uncomfortable, and some of them were clearly embarrassed. They accordingly appeared relieved when the elder finally stopped chanting and they could leave the stage. A few of them, together with the elder, bowed briefly to the applauding audience before departing.

The tree having been removed from the stage, preparations were made for the next show, which was announced as a New Year's "House Cleaning Ritual" (tu vaj tu loog tos xyoo tshiab). This performance actually comprised segments of two rituals that were performed separately within each village household early in the morning of the first day of the traditional New Year Celebration in Laos. The first ritual was intended to summon home all ancestral souls of the household, both human and animal, as well as any peri-patetic souls of the living members, and to enjoin
them to stay for the duration of the celebration. The sacrifice offered for the souls' return varied according to the household's resources: one chicken for each human soul in the wealthiest families to one egg for each in the poorest. The offerings, either the parboiled chickens or the eggs, would be placed with burning incense sticks in the doorway of the house, and the head of the family would intone a request for the souls to return. At this time, he would also cast his "divination horns" (kuam neeb: the two sides of a split tip of a buffalo's horn) until their lay on the floor showed that the souls had arrived. He would then burn some paper money (nominally 1,000 Indian rupees), or strips of paper if the latter could not be afforded, in order to secure the souls' protection for his family and its crops during the new year.

The other ritual, also performed by the family head, was directed toward the protective house spirits (dab xwmkab). Kneeling before the spirits' house shrine and holding forth a live cock as an offering, the leader would supplicate the spirits to watch over and bring good fortune to the household for the forthcoming year. He would then sacrifice the fowl and affix some of its small feathers with its blood to their shrine. The cock was then cooked and offered again to the spirits along with some real or spurious paper money in a further request for support. The divination horns would then be cast in order to ascertain if the spirits' support had been secured, and finally the fowl would be eaten by the household members.

In the San Diego New Year's combined enactment of these two rituals, an old man, whose only traditional article of clothing was a pink waist sash, stood before the same T.V. table-altar used earlier by the shaman, which now held a plastic bowl filled with eggs and a few burning incense sticks. Chanting solemnly, and seemingly oblivious to the audience, he bounced the divination horns in his hands, and in one fluid movement, dropped them onto the floor, examined their lay, picked them up, and started again. Because his chanting was barely audible, the MC lowered one
of the microphones down from the bandstand to the floor next to him, which suddenly projected his voice, with a good amount of feedback, across the entire hall. Totally unaffected by this intrusion, his chanting and casting of horns continued until they fell with one on its face and the other on its back: the sign that the souls had arrived. He then lifted the bowl in a brief gesture of supplication.

This ended the first ritual; the bowl and T.V. table were replaced with a wooden and paper structure representing the shrine of the protective house spirits. Holding the previously used cock, which was still alive but by now stunned with exhaustion, the old man knelt before the shrine and lifted up the fowl as an offering. Maintaining this posture, he briefly intoned the request for the spirits' protection, then stood and bowed slightly toward the audience, who responded with polite applause.12

The final performance of a religious nature concerned the traditional funeral ceremony (ntees tuag). In Laos, this ceremony may have lasted as long as two weeks, with its primary focus falling on the day of burial (hnub tshwm tshav). The intensification of ritual at this time was intended to facilitate the journey of the deceased's soul to the netherworld: animals were offered in sacrifice to the soul to sustain it in its journey and to the spirits to secure their guidance along the way; guns were fired into the air to frighten away evil spirits; drums, gongs, and wind instruments were played in order to announce to the ancestral spirits that a new soul would soon be joining them; and members of the deceased's family would dance to show respect to his departed soul and all of its ancestral relatives.

The only segment of this elaborate ceremony to be performed at the San Diego New Year Celebration was the sacrificial offering of food to the deceased's soul (pam tuag). A small coffee table was placed on the stage with a jug of commercial red wine, a paper cup, and two plates of cooked food, one of rice and the other of pork. The microphone was taken out of
its stand and placed on the table. The old man who had acted as the elder in the earlier "tree ritual" stood before the table, took a plastic spoonful of rice, and intoned to the soul that this offering was being made so that it would have a safe journey to the land of the ancestors. The same routine was repeated with the pork and finally, the wine.

Although this was the last enactment of a religious ritual, the program continued with performances of traditional New Year games, dances, and music. At the close of these "Culture Shows," the "MC" invited the audience to assemble outside the hall, where long tables laden with traditional food were awaiting them.

THE RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATION

The enactment of these ritual routines during the 1979 San Diego New Year Celebration exemplifies the transformation that is occurring in the traditional Hmong religious system as a result of the doubt that now surrounds their spiritual beliefs and practices. Since their new environment is extremely nonsupportive of both their traditional supernatural beliefs and associated rituals, the symbolic enactment of these beliefs through the ritual process no longer occurs on the continuing, everyday basis as it did in Laos. Just as their daily experience no longer involves the migration of villages across mountains, the construction and maintenance of houses and tools, the tending of crops and livestock, and the continual production of food and clothing, so too has the supernatural belief and ritual complex that gave meaning to this experience and directed their actions within it been irretrievably lost. The result, as I have argued, is an increasing appearance of spiritual doubt.

While the daily confrontation with new material conditions of life creates many problems for the Hmong for which there are no easy solutions, the attendant problem of the decline in spiritual certitude is even more perplexing because it is more subtle, being rooted in the very identities of the believers and therefore more refractory to any programmatic
treatment, on the part of either the refugee assistance agencies or the Hmong themselves. Again following Geertz, a resolution to this crisis in faith, if one is to be found, will have to come out of the same "confrontation of traditional forms of faith with altered conditions of life" that produced it in the first place.

Here we come to the role of the New Year "Culture Shows" in helping to resolve this crisis. No longer able to maintain their ritual practices as an integral part of their daily experience, and having to face the unsettling doubt that results, the Hmong in San Diego have followed possibly the only route available to them in their new environment: they have taken their traditional ritual practices out of the context of everyday life and deposited them in the protective gallery of a public theatrical performance. Here they can serve, if no longer as the symbolic integrators of thought, affect, and experience, at least as mnemonic repositories of religious beliefs whose daily utility has ended but whose importance in maintaining a sense of ongoing ethnic identity is still very much in evidence.

The New Year Celebration, then, has become the main gallery for the preservation of traditional rituals and their associated beliefs, not only for those of the traditional celebration itself, but also for the religious complex in general (e.g., the shamanistic and funeral performances). The New Year Celebration is the likely candidate for this task of preservation because of both its traditional importance and its similarity in overall form and occurrence to the American traditions of Christmas and New Year's.

Interviews conducted with the Hmong leaders who helped to organize the 1979 celebration attest to its preservational function. When asked why they decided to hold the "culture shows" as part of their New Year's festivities, they answered, independently and consistently, that the performances were not the "real thing," but "just shows" intended mainly to demonstrate some of their traditional customs to those
of their children who were too young to remember or to have experienced them in Laos, and to their American friends who had known the Hmong only as refugees—in the case of the former, "so that they don't forget how their ancestors lived," and in the case of the latter, "so that they can learn something about our culture." When asked how the performances were received by themselves and by the other adults in attendance, the answers were not as readily forthcoming, as if they were too self-evident to be easily formulated: "They made us feel good," "they made us happy."

The responses to both questions corroborated my own observations of the audience during the performances. The children sat quietly throughout, most of them in a semicircle directly in front of the stage, their eyes fixed with wonderment at the events before them. The adults were equally attentive but more animated, smiling and laughing with recognition, pointing and commenting among themselves about particular aspects of the routines or about their associated memories, and many of them near the stage taking pictures.

However, the fact that these ritual performances were intended not to convey their traditional meanings, but as acts either of cultural instruction (for the children and American guests) or of entertainment and celebration (for the adults), points beyond their preservational function to the larger religious transformation that this new function represents. In other words, the intentional theatrical showcasing of rituals that traditionally had no purpose beyond their own self-contained meanings represents a transformation, if not in the content of belief, certainly in the form it assumes. Again, what Geertz has written of Moroccans and Indonesians I believe holds also for the Hmong: "What is believed to be true has not changed... or not changed very much. What has changed is the way in which it is believed. Where there once was faith, there are now reasons" (1968: 17).
To conclude, the doubt that now permeates the Hmong's traditional religious beliefs as a result of their resettlement in this society has in turn transformed these beliefs and their attendant rituals and symbolic images from intrinsically meaningful revelations of spiritual truth to ideological reminders of that truth's importance. Geertz has referred to this transformation as the change from "religiousness" to "religious-mindedness," from "being held by religious convictions" to "holding them" (1968: 61). The Hmong, who have felt the hold of their convictions slip away, have reached out and grasped them in an attempt to at least retain them as emblems of their ethnic and cultural identities. No longer able to trust the spiritual power of their traditional beliefs, they have now focused on their spiritual reputation. To guard this reputation, they have closeted away the rituals and symbolic elements through which these beliefs were previously expressed, and once a year when it is appropriate to do so, they take them out, dust them off—although their old glow of persuasiveness will never quite return—and display them in the showcase of their New Year Celebration, where they serve as reminders of a rapidly receding past.
*The field work on which this paper is based was conducted within the San Diego Hmong community intermittently between August 1979 and March 1980. Further elaboration and clarification has been made as a result of additional research conducted up to October, 1981; but the "ethnographic present" of the paper remains within the original period.

I would like to thank F.G. Bailey, Michael Meeker, Ganath Obeyesekeke, and my wife, Amina Namika Raby for both their encouragement and critical assistance in the preparation of this paper. Special thanks go to my main research assistant, Tong Vang, for his patience and insight in helping me with the Hmong terms and with some of the description of the traditional Hmong religion used herein. Any remaining mistakes, of course, are my responsibility. And above all, to the members of the San Diego Hmong community, without whose cooperation this paper could never have been written: Kuv ua nej tsaug.

1. This extremely generalized sketch of the traditional Hmong religious system is drawn from two ethnographic reports from Thailand, as well as from interviews with local informants conducted to adjust for any differences in Laos. In comparing these ethnographic descriptions (Bernatzik 1970 and Geddes 1976) with the interview data, it appears that the differences are minor.

2. I have used the RPA (Romanized Popular Alphabet) for all Hmong terms in this paper. Since the phonological aspects of this orthography are too complex to be described here, the reader is urged to consult Heimbach (1979) for a guide to pronunciation.

3. At the time to which this paper refers (winter, 1980), the San Diego population numbered about
1,200 and was concentrated primarily in a lower-middle class, ethnically mixed neighborhood not over two square miles in area. Although the population today has grown to around 4,500 and is more widely dispersed, it continues to exhibit the high degree of social and cultural cohesion it did two years ago--thus the designation "community." Other areas with sizable Hmong populations are Orange County, California; Minneapolis; St. Paul; Denver; Portland; Providence, R.I.; and Missoula, Montana.

The only work heretofore published on the Hmong in the United States that deals with religious change is a monograph concerning the Montana population (Bessac and Rainbolt 1978). Although its treatment of religious change is not sufficient to warrant any definitive conclusion, it does appear from what is presented that some of the changes I have observed in the San Diego community are occurring there as well.

4. One informant expressed his doubt in the existence of local Hmong spirits in this manner: "In Laos we believed there were spirits in the mountains. Here, maybe the American Indians believe in spirits, but those (pointing in the direction of the nearby Laguna range) are their mountains, not ours."

5. Even the most acculturated members of the community continue to "pray" to their ancestors to help them with such problems, but only after they have done everything possible on their own to obtain the desired outcome. In other words, they tag the supplication of their ancestors onto the end of the "rational" thought process that they have learned to employ here--as a way of "hedging their bets."

6. This is not to say that ancestor worship was not a family concern, but since an entire local lineage segment would often worship collectively, the associated rituals were given a public form.

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7. The description of the traditional New Year Celebration used throughout this section is based on Bernatzik (1970: 278-282) and Geddes (1976: 91-94), and both of these ethnographic accounts from Thailand have been adjusted wherever appropriate to fit better the patterns prevalent in the areas of Laos from which most of the local refugees originated.

8. The Americans in attendance included teachers, resettlement workers, health care specialists, and others who have helped the Hmong in their adjustment to the local society.

9. As far as I have been able to determine, gift giving was not an important part of the traditional New Year Celebration, and is thus likely to be a product of acculturation. And even then, most of the present gift-giving centers only on children.

10. The audience included about 700 Hmong, 25 Americans, and 10 Laotians. The remaining 500 or so of the local Hmong population did not attend, according to the community leaders, because of illness, transportation and child-care problems, or opposition to the traditional nature of the program. This latter group comprised about 10 conservative Protestant families (about 50 people), whose conversion demanded a total rejection of their traditional religion. Many of the attending Hmong were also Christians, but Catholics whose conversion apparently allows them to see less conflict between their old and new religions.

11. This description refers to a Thai Hmong shamanistic performance taken from Bernatzik (1970: 238-256) and Geddes (1976: 78, 97-100) and localized for Laos through interviews conducted with local informants. Again, the differences are minor.

12. After the celebration, I was told by the main leader of the community that the cock was later
taken home by a small group of elders and sacrificed to the spirits—a practice in which only they and a few others of their age still occasionally engage.

REFERENCES


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HMONG MYTHS, LEGENDS AND FOLK TALES:
A RESOURCE FOR CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Charles R. Johnson

INTRODUCTION

I approach this subject with considerable caution, being neither a specialist in mythology nor an ethnologist, but rather a teacher of French and of English to speakers of other languages. Yet, the experiences of studying a Bantu language and culture while teaching five years in Africa, and of living five years on the Navajo Reservation, and, more recently, of sponsoring resettlement of Hmong refugees, have convinced me of the need for cross-cultural understanding and of the value of knowing a people's traditional oral literature as one aid toward this understanding. I offer here a progress report on a project I am developing, with some impressions bearing on the subject stated in the title, but with no final or profound conclusions.

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH PROJECT

In February 1976, when I went to the airport to meet Minnesota's first Hmong family, I did not know one thing about the Hmong. Nor did scarcely anyone else in Minnesota, including those assigned as their teachers. Each year following that, as more and more Hmong came, giving Minnesota the largest group of Hmong in the United States, with about 10,000 of the 40,000 now living in this country, many of us kept regretting that most of the teaching materials available were not appropriate for the Hmong—and even when teachers taught survival English without a text, they had no culturally relevant books for teaching reading. By 1979 I decided to quit just regretting and do something.

I asked myself, what is a familiar content on which to base literacy and ESL materials? Authors
like Father Savina, David Crockett Graham, Yang Dao, Jean Larteguy, and Jean Mottin have said, each in his own way, that oral tradition is the glue that has held the Hmong together for thousands of years. Suspecting that surely Hmong myths, legends, and folk tales would be stories the Hmong who were coming here would be familiar with and might be glad to find in reading books used to teach them English, and that these stories would, at the same time, teach Americans something about Hmong people, Hmong life and values, I set out to supervise the recording of some zaj dab neeg Hmoob here in Minnesota, with support from the Northwest Area Foundation and from Macalester College.

By now, eight story tellers have taped about twenty-two hours of this oral literature for us. This has been written in Hmong language and most of the stories translated, often first into French (because the most refined language skill of my interpreters was in French), then into English. Several selected stories have been adapted to different instructional levels, have been published, and are now being distributed. The most inclusive version, a more scholarly Hmong-English edition of full length stories, with an introduction and cultural notes, is still in preparation, with hope that it will be finished in January 1982.

Let me outline clearly my purposes in undertaking this research project, for these purposes were really four:

First, as mentioned above, I wanted to produce some appropriate reading materials to facilitate the learning of English by Hmong and other Indochinese refugees, on whatever level they might be reading;

Second, I wanted to demonstrate respect for the Hmong elders who know the oral literature and how to tell the stories, and who often have all too little place in the new life in this new land;

Third, I wanted to provide a resource for cultural interpretation of the Hmong to Americans who
either just do not know the Hmong, or who are hostile to their presence here, to help them know and appreciate the wisdom and values of these new residents.

These three purposes relate, of course, to the urgent need to hasten the Hmong's adjustment to living in the United States and to ease some of their personal and social trauma during this transition.

And there was a fourth purpose: I wanted to help preserve an endangered species, the art and language of some of the unwritten zaj dab neeg Hmoob, before they should perish and be lost forever to scholars, and to the whole human family.

PROBLEMS AND QUESTIONS

Next, I will mention some of the problems encountered while doing this project. One problem has been in the translation. Translation is always fraught with pitfalls. Two words do not mean exactly the same thing in two languages and cultures, especially when these are as different as Hmong and American. I found that I had to search very carefully for the nearest American English words to express faithfully the meaning of the Hmong words used. This has called for countless hours, running into months, of delicate questioning of interpreters. When kings are mentioned in the stories, does this mean "ruler"? or "rich man"? (Jean Mottin writes that the many occurrences of kings in Hmong folk tales proves the ancient Chinese origin of the stories, since the Hmong have never had kings.) But I wanted to question my informants to learn what qualities would be attributed to these kings, in the mind of the tellers and of the listeners.

You can imagine similar questions which would arise concerning words translated as "servants" or "slaves", "God", "heaven" or "sky", "spirits", "demons", "devil", or "witches". Or even with much more concrete and mundane things such as "corn crib", "storage shelf", "attic", "stove", "basket", "knife", "broom and dust pan", "basin", "pots", "rat", "fox",

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or terms like "a propitious slope", (which turned out to be a setting appropriate for building a house or for burial of the dead), or "moon-eggs" -- was it boiled eggs, fried eggs, raw eggs, egg white? Or was it rather mucus, or some other sticky body fluid?

In addition to these many questions of translation, other questions kept recurring to me: whether the cultural elements introduced by the stories — especially the social and spiritual elements I will deal with below — described very closely the culture of present day Hmong in Laos or here in the United States. And the question of which stories could be beneficially introduced to the broader public of Americans, especially those who have not travelled widely, nor related to other cultures with much sympathy or understanding, or who have not read closely, with a sensitive and open mind, such literary expressions of our own past culture as the Odyssey, or Chaucer, or the Old Testament.

I was aware that some Americans are judgemental and suspicious toward people with different customs and values, and that ugly, false rumors are being circulated, alleging for example, that these refugees are "rich", that they sell their daughters and buy their wives, or kidnap them, that they practice illegal polygamy, that they are killing and eating dogs, or that we have taken in a mass of people who want to live on handouts instead of working. You may also have heard these false rumors, or others, told by groups that feel insecure and threatened, and by their children who are in schools with your children and mine.

I wanted to use folk tales to help these people understand the Hmong and like them — or at least accept them. Then when I found in the folk tales stories like that of one man who had a monkey-wife, and who, when his brother shot her accidentally and stupidly, provoked a war that killed all the monkeys, then feasted for weeks on his big supply of monkey meat, I realized that I had to be tactful and prudent in handling this material, in translating and explaining it.
When, in one story, a man and woman united in an incestuous marriage give birth to a deformed child and are advised by a wise seer to cut the little monster into giblets, and they do this, we realize that some material in folk tales and legends is sensitive, even potentially volatile, and that if we expect to use it for cultural interpretation, this calls for judicious selection and presentation.

Thus, I have suggested a precaution in the introduction to the tales I have collected, a caveat. This is a warning to the reader to beware of jumping to an unwarranted conclusion by making the unconscious assumption that there is a one to one correspondence between everything in the folk literature and the facts of actual Hmong people, beliefs, behaviors and values. American readers must keep in mind the witches, elves, fairy godmothers, magic and miracles, talking animals, as well as the less-than-respectable conduct of some of the Hebrew, Greek, Roman, Norse, Germanic and Celtic heroes, gods and demi-gods who are part of our own heritage.

With these cautions in mind—concerning translations and inter-cultural interpretation—I have pursued close translation of the sizeable body of story texts we have collected and written in Hmong. The very thoughtful and scholarly Hmong informants working with me have endured relentless questioning in our attempts at accuracy and respectful interpretation. And I am still persuaded that the Hmong oral folk literature contains a wealth of valuable information, suggestions, and question-stimulators, concerning Hmong people, their life, behaviors, beliefs, and values.

CULTURAL ELEMENTS IN HMONG FOLK LITERATURE

What then, are some examples of preliminary findings from these folk tales which can help Americans understand the Hmong in our midst? For brevity we might group them under three headings: material culture, the spirit world, and social culture. (This is not to say that these represent a Hmong way of
conceptualizing reality, for to the Hmong, what we call the material, the spiritual, and the human or social, are all united and integrated into one coherent whole. This is rather my way of analyzing and categorizing.)

As for allusions to material culture, the myths, legends and folk tales abound in references to objects that filled the world familiar to Hmong people in their former life: their food, their houses, their tools, the ghee. In the stories, Hmong farmers clear land of trees, vines and weeds for planting corn and rice. (But we find no reference to the practice of burning to prepare new farm land.) the rice and corn (of many varieties), also onions and garlic, are stored in baskets on the attic platform, or hung to dry near the fire. The foot-powered rice-pounding mill appears in several stories, as do winnowing baskets, corn-grinding mill stones, basins and cooking pots. Many stories mention cooking of food—rice and chicken, pork or beef, or buffalo meat—often for feasts on special occasions. We hear or read of the kind of earthenware stove built by the Hmong of Laos in their rural village homes of axe-hewn boards and thatched roofs. We read of spinning and of weaving hemp cloth, and of the wooden vat used for dying it. We read of weapons the Hmong used for hunting, of the crossbow and of rifles. The saber occurs often, as an ever-present tool for Hmong men. Baskets, back-packs, brooms, woven mats, fish traps, shoes, clothing, iron, copper and silver, all take their place in the settings of the folk tales. Seeing these scenes concretely depicted may help Americans who are encountering Hmong people here to envision the life of the Hmong in Laos before coming to America, and to understand some of the problems they experience in adapting to life and work in our complex technical culture.

Turning all too briefly to indications of the spiritual world in which the traditional Hmong of Laos lived and moved, we find in the stories a numerous population of spiritual beings, some bene-
volent, others cruel and evil who ate people or caused illness or death. In the legends and myths, the sky and the spirit world were close to the world of the people and there was much movement back and forth. Beings could change from one realm to the other, partaking sometimes of the nature of spirits—what we would call supernatural beings—while becoming at other times mortal men, living in this world.

Reincarnation is an ordinary and natural occurrence; the same character is reborn after death, sometimes several times. Metamorphoses also occur in the stories. There is a recurrent tendency for people to take the form of animals: a toad marries a girl and sometimes appears as a handsome young man; a wasp appears at intervals as a human person; a dragon's daughter becomes the wife of a man. It happens frequently that tigers change to men or men to tigers.

All the Hmong folk tales I have recorded, with only two or three exceptions, contain (as do most folk literatures) events which we would call supernatural, or magic. One boy can stop the sun by holding up his hand; his cruel teacher cuts his head off but puts it back and restores him to life three times. Objects appear—houses, food, servants, gold—as if by enchantment. One hero can travel swiftly from one end of the world to the other, and even to the spirit world, by paddling with a magic oar. Dragons appear in many stories, generally as cruel enemies; and people appear inside the dragons, carving and eating their vital organs. Spirits or people moving through the sky cause rain and wind, thunder and lightning.

One important character in Hmong folk tales deserves special mention. This is Shao (in Hmong: Saub). Shao is not God, but has some of the attributes other cultures ascribe to a supreme being. He is not the creator and lord of the world, but is generally presented as a wise man, a seer who knows everything. Shao never intervenes in human events, but is often consulted for advice in time of trouble, for he can always tell people what to do to solve their problems.
We know that in real life, a considerably number of Hmong are now converted Christians, and that through exposure to Western education, many are acquiring empirical scientific conceptions of cause and effect. But in the spiritual realm, while careful investigation can be done through interviews and observation, and would be necessary for an adequate understanding of beliefs that shape the Hmong world view, we can at least say that Hmong myths, legends and folk tales are one rich source for knowing and understanding some of the traditional beliefs that are in the background of modern Hmong as we know them.

The third category of cultural indicators mentioned above is the social realm. The tales are peopled with families, where we generally see the father's wisdom and authority respected and obeyed (but sometimes not), families which are of supreme importance in giving mutual support and protection. (In one story, disaster befalls a family when a tiger eats the father, the mother and all the children. This horrible fate is explained by the fact that the family had moved out of the village and was living apart from all the husband's relatives, where they should have lived, according to normal Hmong custom. The sole survivor, the woman's younger sister, is rescued only when she sends for help from her own parents and brothers.)

The orphan boy is a frequently recurring character in many of the Hmong stories I have collected. (Often the teller says that the orphan's parents have died from eating spoilt food.) But in real life, as I understand the case, orphans do not live alone as in the stories, eating ants and wearing rags; in actual practice, Hmong children who have lost their parents are adopted by their father's brother or father. When we understand the importance of the family support group (both in stories and in real life), we see that an orphan, left without any relatives at all, would indeed be a destitute and hopeless person.
Generally, in the stories, the major question arising out of the orphan boy's poverty is how he is going to get a wife. And in several tales, daughters are sent out to search for husbands. Thus, we see that marriage arrangement is an important preoccupation of the people in the stories as in actual Hmong culture. And yet, in the stories I have collected, there is only one description (really only a suggestion, and a humorous parody, at that) of the elaborate ritualized marriage negotiations which Father Yves Bertrais has described and preserved in French. (In the folk tale parody, the family of the girl threatened by a tiger carries on negotiations leading the tiger to believe he is going to get the girl as his bride, but really to trick him into a trap, and his death.)

In addition to the orphan, another recurrent character in the stories is the youngest daughter of the family, usually named Ntxawm (pronounced "Ndzeu" but transliterated in French and English as "Yer"). She is generally depicted as more intelligent, more industrious, and above all, more obedient and loyal to her parents, than her older sisters. (This may be surprising when we know that in real Hmong life, age carries with it respect and authority.) In the stories, the younger sister sometimes goes to live with her older sister and her brother-in-law to help with child-care and housework. (In Laos, it was sometimes the case that she would become a second wife, if the family liked the son-in-law very much.)

In the folk tales, it is important for a man to have a good wife, one who is not only a hard worker but also intelligent and clever. In more than one story, it is the wife who, through her intelligence, sometimes through ruse, and often with help from miraculous powers, brings success and prosperity to her husband. This concept of an astute woman may represent an ideal in the Hmong mind, and would bear comparison with actual attitudes in real life.
Buried treasure frequently occurs in the folk tales. We are told that, in reality, Hmong heads of family would indeed often bury their silver, and sometimes die taking with them the secret of its hiding place. So finding a pot of silver in a field, near a rock or tree, or even in the floor of the house, would not be pure fantasy.

When we ask what values are held up in Hmong folk tales as worthy of effort and attainment, we find industriousness, intelligence, modesty, filial devotion and respect, and the hope of attaining prosperity and leisure.

The hard-working person is portrayed as a model to emulate. The Hmong farmer who was lazy and did not work to build storage bins for his crops was punished. A fat and lazy son-in-law (and his wife, who was haughty and vain) brought only paltry gifts of millet and measly birds to the wife's parents, and suffered the father's rejection, while the devoted younger sister and her hard-working orphan boy husband brought quantities of good sticky rice and a large roasted pig, and received the father's gifts and blessing.

An important cultural and moral value illustrated in Hmong folk tales is that one must look beneath the surface to find true worth, for outward appearances are often deceptive. One example is the oft-occurring youngest daughter, as mentioned above; though less beautiful and less prestigious, she is generally the most worthy. A clear example of this is seen in the story of Niam Nkauj Zuag Paj. In one version the orphan boy is told to choose as his wife the youngest of three sisters who will come by riding on filthy dung-encrusted horses. In another version, the aspiring orphan is told to ask his dragon-host for his mangy sick-looking cat. In both cases, the prize is Niam Nkauj Zuag Paj, a woman endowed with all the virtues any man could hope for in a wife.
A third example of true value being found beneath a deceptively shabby surface appearance is found in the story of Yob Nraug Ntsuag (Yao the Orphan), wherein Ntxawm tells her husband, on the occasion of their first visit home, when their baby is able to sit alone, that her father will ask them what gifts they want, that he should not ask for silver or gold, neither for horses and oxen, nor for food like rice and chicken, for all these things represent sorrow and mourning. He should ask rather for three old worthless-looking objects—a round piece of iron, a dry gourd, and a scrap of buffalo hide. Yao does as he was told, but does not understand, and on the trip back home, grows very annoyed with this cumbersome and apparently useless junk, and even throws it all away. But Ntxawm is wise and knows that these are marvelous objects, and they eventually bring the young couple food, a new house, servants, rice fields—in short a life of plenty and ease.

A survey of the Hmong tales I have recorded shows that this happy ending often comes to the story characters as a reward for their hard work and patience, their virtue and intelligence, their wisdom in using spiritual power, and their recognition of true value beneath outward appearances.

CONCLUSION

In summary, Hmong oral folk literature, if it is interpreted cautiously, always in comparison with serious and careful ethnographies and in consultation with culturally sensitive Hmong informants, can be a valuable resource for cultural understanding and interpretation.

This comparison of cultural elements in Hmong myths, legends, and folk tales with actual contemporary Hmong culture is modest and tentative. It is an effort to know more about the Hmong who have come to our country and to relate to them more appropriately. But since oral folk literature expresses the collective unconscious of a people, and since this
collective unconscious is universal, the Hmong, in adding their abundant literary treasure to our own heritage, can help us know more about ourselves, and how to live with all peoples.

WORKS CONSULTED


. Anthology of Hmong folk tales in Hmong and English, full length versions, with introduction and cultural notes. Unpublished manuscript.


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HMONG MIGRATION AND LEADERSHIP
IN LAOS AND IN THE UNITED STATES

Cheu Thao

The purpose of this paper is to contrast Hmong secondary migration in the United States with migration or moving patterns in traditional Hmong society; I will show that secondary migration is almost identical to the move of a group of families from one village to another in traditional society. I will also discuss in detail the function of moving as a consolidation of clan power; I will show how village and clan leaders increase their working power through the moves of their followers, and give examples of such moves in Laos and in the United States.

The information I will present comes partly from the literature on Hmong society; there are many descriptions of traditional migration of a village to a new site. My information on moving to an already-occupied site comes from my own recollections, which I checked with older Hmongs. The information on moving patterns in the United States comes from my own experiences as a clan leader, and also from my extensive contacts with Hmongs throughout the United States via the WATS line in my office, which is my responsibility to answer whenever Hmongs call.

The paper is in three main sections:
1. traditional Hmong migration patterns
2. secondary migration in the United States
3. leadership and moving

TRADITIONAL MOVING PATTERNS

Overview

As nomadic peoples have done since the Neolithic age, Hmong have always moved from site to site in hope and expectation of improving their living conditions.
Traditional moves were of two general types: either a move to an entirely new site, which usually involved the move of an entire village; or a move to an already-occupied site, which usually involved the move of one or more families from one village to another. These two types of moves differed in important respects, so I shall discuss them separately.

Moving to a New Site

- Reasons for Moving. Many writers have shown how Hmong moved when the soil of their land became infertile (Yang Dao 1975: 59-60 and Geddes 1976: 33-34, for example). This was the first of two reasons for the people of a village to look for a new site.

The second reason for looking for a new site was to get away from disease. Although Hmong villages were always located on the heights to avoid disease, Hmong did not understand the causes of disease. We did not know that mosquitoes carry disease, so we did not sleep under mosquito nets. We did not understand the relationship between dirt and disease, and so we ate with dirty hands, and did not boil the water we drank. We had herbal medicines to treat the body, and shamans to help with the psychological aspects of sickness, but we of course did not have doctors.

We thought disease was caused by evil spirits. If a communicable disease like malaria caused many deaths in a village, the people in the village began to think of moving to get away from the malicious spirits, especially the phim nyuj vaim or 'forest spirits,' that were inhabiting the village and causing the deaths.

- Reasons for Choosing a Particular New Site. The choice of a new site for a village depended on four major considerations: the quality of the soil, the absence of disease, the "luckiness" of the location, and the closeness of the new site to the old site. Hmong were primarily farmers, of course, and were constantly dreaming about finding rich land. A relative, friend, or even stranger who passed through a village

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was always asked about his land: "Xyoo no, koj qoob loo puas zoo?" "Were your crops good this year?"

A second question the relative, friend or stranger was asked had to do with health: "Sawv daws puas muaj mob muaj nkees dabtsi?" "Is anyone sick?" The second major consideration in choosing a new site was whether it was free of disease, and therefore free of the evil spirits that caused disease.

A third consideration was whether the site was a "lucky" site. A "lucky" site, which was hard to find, brought good fortune to the entire village. The people stayed healthy and productive; the animals--pigs, chicken, and cattle--grew well. Villages could remain on a "lucky" site for as long as twenty years--much longer than the two or three years a less fortunate site could be inhabited. Finding a "lucky" site required a lot of time and expertise. Usually the spiritual people in a village were the only ones who could find "lucky" sites. A "lucky" site for a village had the same characteristics as an auspicious burial place: "The shoulder of a mountain sloping at about 30° - 60°, surrounded by other mountains... is the most desirable place" (Chindarsi 1976: 91).

The last consideration in choosing a new site was its distance from the old site: it could be up to two days walk from the old site, but no more. Hmong were afraid of spending nights out in the forest, because we believed that the phim nyuj vaim 'forest spirits' could capture our children if they weren't inside a house during the night. One night in the forest was all that could be risked, and so a good site with rich soil was rejected if it was further than two days walk away--although it would be remembered as a possible site for future moves.

• **The Decision to Move.** Most new sites were discovered by the men in a village while they were hunting, or through contacts with relatives, friends, or strangers passing through the village. A possible new site would be brought to the attention of the village leader, who would then convince the heads of households to make an exploratory trip to the site to study
the soil and location. If the site was satisfactory to most of the heads of households, the village leader would decide to move the entire village there.

It was sometimes the case that the village leader did not like a new site, but some of the heads of households did. When that happened, the heads of households were free to move their families to the new site.

The village leaders, who were elected by the heads of households and then appointed by the district chief, played a very important role in the decision to move. (I will discuss this in more detail in a later section.)

- **Mechanics of Moving.** Moving to a new site could only occur immediately after the New Year celebration, i.e., at the time when the weather permitted the clearing of new fields, around December or January.

After the New Year celebration, the heads of households and all the men of working age (between about 14 and about 45) would go to the new site, leaving the old people, women, and children behind. The men built new houses and made tables, chairs, and beds. They also cleared new fields for rice, corn, or poppies. When this was done, they returned to the old site to move the other members of their families.

Clothing, kitchen equipment like pots, pans, and bowls, and valuable personal belongings like silver bars and necklaces were packed up and taken. Anything easily replaced, like the walls of the house and furniture, was left behind. Horses were packed with heavy things like sacks of rice and corn. Men and women, with babies on their backs, lead-ropes of the pigs, cows, buffalo, and horses in their hands, started off for the new site.

Once there, adjustment to the new site was quickly made, and very soon everyone was familiar with the new environment.
• **Problems Associated With Moving.** Although Hmong were experienced at moving, we sometimes felt upset and depressed about leaving the old site. We had become attached to the rivers, creeks, and mountains of the old site, as well as our houses. But the quality of the land and considerations of health had priority, and so we were resigned to the idea of moving. In cases where only part of a village moved, there were much greater problems because people were often separated from their parents, brothers and sisters, and boy- and girl-friends. (I will talk about this in more detail in the next section.)

**Moving to an Already-Occupied Site**

• **Background: Clan Structure of Villages.** There were always at least two clans in a village, for marriage purposes. One clan (the majority clan) would often have more members than the others (the minority clans), and would consequently have more power in everyday affairs.

Although there were members of different clans available as marriage partners in a village, it did not mean that village boys were required to marry within the village. The boys, and men looking for another wife, were eager to look for beautiful and industrious girls outside their villages. They, and the girls too, were convinced that the boys and girls they saw every day were not as attractive as those they saw less often. In addition, most Hmong men preferred to marry girls from outside the village because in cases of elopement, the distance would prevent the girl's parents from pursuing the eloping couple (cf. Geddes 1976, ch. 4, for a more extensive discussion of the pros and cons of marrying outside the village). Within a village, then, there were ties to clans in other villages. These contacts between villages often led to the movement of families from one village to another.

• **Reasons for Moving to Another Village.** A minority clan in a village generally looked for opportunities to be united with other clan members and therefore to
become more powerful; conversely, a minority clan leader who wanted to be the village leader or district chief tried to persuade clan members from other villages to move to his village. A major reason, then, for the movement of families or clans from one village to another was to consolidate clan power.

A second reason for movement to another village was to be reunited with relatives.

"... kinship connections are of first importance. Each household has a range of ties through both husbands and wives. They are like invisible telephone lines linking the household to areas near and far, and along any one of them may come a message of hope stimulating a movement. Ties between males linked patrilinearly are likely to be most often activated because they carry the additional voltage of clanship, but those between women also frequently occasion movement because the strength of the message may offset the weaker power of the line." (Geddes 1976: 233).

- **Mechanics of Moving.** Moving to another village, like moving to a new site, could only happen after the New Year celebration. The heads of the households that had decided to move made a preliminary visit to the new village, to look for land they could clear for rice, corn and poppy fields. After that, they and their family members all moved at once.

The families were provided with temporary housing and food by their relatives in the new village. Generosity was (and still is) an important element in Hmong culture. Relatives, friends, or even strangers were housed and fed, sometimes for months, and in a typical Hmong house there was usually a bed, txaj qhuas, reserved for guests.

- **Problems in Moving to Another Village.** Because a move to another village involved only part of the people in the old village, the move often brought about the separation of close family members and boy- and
girl-friends. To compound the unhappiness, there were of course no ways of communicating with relatives and friends left behind except to make visits. It would often happen that married daughters and their parents would be separated without seeing one another for years.

Often boys and girls (especially girls, because they were not allowed to travel alone from one village to another) became very depressed and tried to commit suicide. (If a Hmong girl falls in love with someone, it is very hard to convince her to look for someone else; she feels that her loved one is the only one she could possibly be happy with.)

- **Adjustment to the New Village.** Orientation in the new village was no problem at all. A Hmong getting lost in a Hmong village of 25-30 houses was unheard of; although there were of course no streets or signs, each house was built according to individual preference and was easy to identify.

**MOVING PATTERNS IN THE UNITED STATES**

**Overview**

While the circumstances surrounding Hmong moving patterns in the United States are radically different from circumstances in Laos, Hmong secondary migration is directly parallel in fundamental respects to traditional moving patterns. The Hmong view of moving as a response to unsatisfactory conditions, or as a means of improvement of situation, is the same in the United States as it was in Laos. The influence of the extended family is the same. And the procedure for moving is, except for superficial details, the same as the traditional procedure for moving from one village to another.

Americans consider all refugee moves from one part of the country to another as the same, and call them all occurrences of secondary migration. Hmong secondary migration, however, is of two distinctly different kinds, which I will call **reunification migration** and
betterment migration, and which I will discuss separately.

Reunification Migration

Reunification migration, or moving to join family, is not really a move by itself, but a continuation of a process than began in Laos.

- Background. Before the 1960s, Hmong communities lived in small communities; because of transportation difficulties and lack of communication, we did not know very many people, and naturally did not have many friends who were not relatives or in-laws.

In 1960, Hmong villages were transported to two major towns, Long Chieng and Sam Thong. Because there were many of us in one place, and as we got to know more people through social, political and economic activities, we developed relationships that went beyond relatives and in-laws. This extension of relationships increased in refugee camps, particularly Ban Vinai and Nan, where Hmong are congregated in greater numbers than they ever were before.

Often the members of a village, clan group or family group will flee Laos at different times, with the intention of reuniting in Thailand; sometimes a group will flee to Thailand in the hope of joining relatives, leaders or friends from whom they have been separated for a long time.

In many cases, they reach Thailand only to find a message waiting for them from their relatives, leaders or friends who have gone to third countries: "Yog nej tuaj txog no, raws qab nawb, tsis li peb yuav tsis sib pom tas ib sim neej" - "If you have come to this place, follow us, otherwise we will never see one another again." The family or clan group will then proceed to the third country.

- Reunification Migration. The Hmong who come to the United States are sponsored according to American procedures, and it often happens that a clan or family group who is following other Hmong is first resettled
in a place far from the Hmong it intends to rejoin. In these cases, plans to move are made as soon as contact is made with the original group. Contact is made quickly: within a few weeks, newly-arrived Hmong learn to use the telephone and to make long-distance calls.

American sponsors are usually not aware of the long-term planning involved in reunification migration, and feel that the decision to move, on the part of the Hmong who have only recently arrived in the United States, is arbitrary. The Lao Family Community in Santa Ana, California, talked to so many Americans about this problem that the following message to Hmong, in Hmong and English, was printed in their August 1981 newsletter:

"The Americans feel that our refugees move around from one state to another too much, to seek only better welfare and education. We get many complaints regarding their problems. We try hard to help them understand why you move. You move because you follow your relatives, friends and family from whom you have been separated for a long time, since the fall of Laos. The Americans understand only a small part of that." (Vangyi 1981: 8).

Reunification migration takes place without the advance gathering of information about the new site that happens in traditional Hmong moving patterns, and that also happens in the other type of Hmong secondary migration. Because of this, and because reunification migration is the last stage in a process that begins in Laos, I do not think it should be considered as true secondary migration as the term is usually used.

Betterment Migration

In contrast to reunification migration, betterment migration—moving to improve one's situation—is identical in all but superficial aspects to the traditional moving pattern from one village to another.
 Reasons for Leaving the Old Site. After being in the United States for a while, Hmong begin to understand the social services available to the community they are resettled in, and to understand that the availability of services is not the same from one area to another. We naturally compare opportunities—especially government assistance and training programs—from community to community.

Most Hmong have little or no education, and no experience with working in western societies. We believe that we cannot achieve prosperity unless we get training. We also have large families, which are difficult to support with jobs that are available to people with no English and no training. Large families, in fact, get more money on government assistance than they do from employment. For these reasons, we are concerned about the availability of government assistance and training programs from area to area in the United States.

There are other reasons as well. Most Hmong refugee men were soldiers who cooperated with the U.S. government to fight communist expansion in Laos. Therefore, they see government assistance and training programs as benefits they are entitled to. Hmong men who live in places where government assistance and training programs are not available feel cheated when they discover that Hmong like them in other places qualify for public assistance. They find that even though they work hard in jobs, they cannot save money, and they are anxious to move to places where they can get services that other Hmong get.

A major reason for leaving a site, then, is that government assistance and training programs are not as readily available as they are in other places.

A second major reason for leaving a site is the presence of community tension. In spite of our reputation for being fierce fighters and good soldiers, Hmong are basically peace lovers. In discussing Hmong preference for hills in our gradual migration south from China, Yang Dao comments: "The plains and valleys were, generally speaking, already settled, and it would have taken a pitched battle to appropriate
them. Since they were peaceable by nature, and there were not very many of them, they were very careful not to make enemies and consequently trouble for themselves" (Yang Dao 1975: 8). The same thing can be said about our concern not to antagonize the American communities we live in. Whole communities of Hmong will move from an area where community tension exists: there are, for example, no Hmong in downtown Los Angeles, New York City, or other big cities.

A case in point is an incident in Orange County. In the late 1970s, hundreds of Hmong moved from different sites to Orange County, especially to Santa Ana, where most of them lived in the Voltaire Apartment Complex. In 1979 an old man of the Xiong clan was murdered early one morning in his apartment. The Hmong community, in searching for reasons for the murder, concluded that the murder occurred because other groups feared that the Hmong increased the competition for housing. After the old man's funeral, many families in his clan moved to Portland; since then, Hmong movement into Orange County has slowed down, and movement out of the county has increased.

To summarize, the two main factors involved in leaving a site are the absence of welfare and training programs and the presence of community tension.

- **Reasons for Choosing a New Site.** In looking at possible new sites, we of course consider whether social services are available, and whether community tension exists.

  We also carefully consider the cost of living, particularly the amount of rent that has to be paid, and the possibility of land that can be bought for farming.

  A fourth consideration in looking for a new site is the presence of clanmates and relatives by marriage. "Muaj Hmoob Thoj tsawg yim nyob tom qhov chaw tod?" "How many Thaos are at that site?" is always a question asked in conversation about sites.
Making a Decision to Move. The decision to move is based on information provided by relatives or trusted friends who live at other sites. If a possible new site is not too far away (i.e., not more than ten hours drive), the heads of households will visit the site, in the same way Hmongos investigated new sites in Laos.

If the new site looks good, the head of household seriously discusses the move with his family members, and arrives at a decision. His desire to move is brought to the attention of the leader of the Hmong community. The community leader might try to discourage the head of household from moving. On the other hand, if the leader feels that moving to the new site will improve the community's situation, he and the rest of his community might join the head of household, and the entire community or a good part of it might move together.

Traditionally, the decision to move was almost entirely in the hands of the village or clan leader. In the United States, however, educated community members are beginning to influence the community leaders' decisions; it is felt that their better understanding of the American community qualifies them to give advice.

General Vang Pao is sometimes involved in decisions to move. Any advice from him is taken into serious consideration, because Hmong feel that he knows best about America as he is the only Hmong who has good contacts with the American government. Many Hmong families have abandoned plans to move after discussing the matter with the general. In early 1980, for example, thirteen Thao families (of which I was the clan leader) were seriously considering moving from Orange County, where the cost of living was high, to Madison, Wisconsin, where most of our branch of the Thao clan lives. The move was discussed at two meetings of heads of households, one at my house, and the other at my nephew's. Everyone agreed to move under the condition that General Vang Pao did not reject the idea and I was assigned to discuss the matter with him. The general told us to stay where we were
because moving involved too much expense and time to adjust to the new community and climate. It was felt that his advice was realistic and so we decided not to move. (The situation changed later in the year when I moved to Washington D.C.; the Orange County Thaos became leaderless, and split up, moving to Fresno or to Wisconsin. Now there is only one Thao family in Orange County.)

Conflicting pressures are beginning to emerge within the individual family over possible migration. The husband, who traditionally made the decision, usually wants to move to a site where his clan lives. His wife tries to influence his decision, as she wants to move to a site where her parents or brothers and sisters live. And the children in the family want to stay where they are, because they have formed attachments to their neighborhood, school, and friends. Most of the time, the husband's decision is final.

- **Mechanics.** Once the decision to move is made, relatives at the new site are notified, and arrangements for temporary housing are discussed. The tradition of hospitality that I mentioned in the previous section has been carried over intact into Hmong life in the United States; it is assumed that relatives and friends will be supported at the new site until they get settled on their own. (The relatives and friends, aware of the expense, try very hard not to stay long.)

The actual move is made by car, bus or plane depending on the status of the family and the distance between the old and new sites. The kinds of things taken to the new site are the same as they were in Laos: clothes, kitchen equipment, and whatever else can be put in a suitcase or the trunk of the car.

Hmong have not developed expensive tastes with regard to furniture and are limited by income to not-very-fancy apartments and houses. We usually buy furniture from second-hand stores, and if we feel the need to apologize to guests, we say something like "Please sit on these used chairs; we don't want to buy new furniture because we still don't know how long we are going to stay here." When we move, we throw
our old furniture away, give it to relatives or sell it at a low price, and plan to buy new used furniture at the new site.

- **Problems Associated with Moving.** The problems associated with migration in the United States are different from those in Laos.

  We do not (at least adults don't) become attached to our surroundings; our houses or apartments are rented, our furniture is not fancy, and we are not acquainted with our neighbors because of the language barrier.

  The depression and unhappiness of having to leave family members and boy- or girl-friends is much less in the United States, because communication is possible over long distances by telephone.

  Factors which were not problems in Laos, on the other hand, are problems here. Traditionally, Hmong were self-supporting; it was easy to house relatives, even for extended periods of time. Here, however, a head of household has difficulty supporting his own family, and sheltering additional people is almost impossible. As I mentioned before, a family moving in with an already-established household tries very hard to move out into its own house as soon as possible.

  After the new house or apartment is moved into, necessary furniture like chairs, tables, and beds has to be bought, and even used furniture is expensive. Many families who have moved to a new site are depending on government assistance, which is very limited—not enough, or just enough, to cover rent and food. The family often has to sit and sleep on the floor for months, eating whatever the relatives can provide. The situation is made worse by the fact that the family's application for welfare often takes weeks to get processed.

  Orientation in the new community, which was obviously not a problem in Laos, presents problems in
the United States. Finding a place to live is a depressing process because of the unfamiliarity with the community, the language barrier, and the low opinion landlords have of people on welfare. Getting into low-cost housing and educational programs often involves waiting for a long time; while Hmong are prepared to wait for what we expect to get, long waiting periods defeat the initial purpose for the move in a great many cases.

Children, who didn't want to leave the old site to begin with, often have special difficulties adjusting to new schools and neighborhoods. They are shy about making new friends, and don't feel comfortable in school to the point that their performance falls much below their performance in their old school. A case in point is the experience of my own three children in their new school in Alexandria. In June, their final report cards for the year recommended that they all be held back for a year, because they had difficulty speaking English. I was surprised, because my children, at ages 10, 7, and 6, are native speakers of English. I asked them why their teachers thought they couldn't speak English, and they explained that they didn't know their teachers and friends well enough and were hesitant to talk to them. The matter eventually got straightened out, and all the children were promoted.

A new site is also difficult to get around in; most adults have to be shown how to get from one place to another, and this takes a long time, especially for those who cannot read instructions.

It even takes a long time to get acquainted with the new Hmong community, especially larger communities where Hmong from different parts of Laos have come. Although there are only about 45,000 Hmong in the United States, we are different enough from one another, depending on where we came from in Laos, to make getting acquainted a little hard.
Comparison of Traditional Moving and Betterment Migration

- Similarities. The overall purpose of Hmong moving, both in the past and now in the United States, is to improve the living situation. Moving is a response to adverse conditions, whether they are social or economic; the possibility of a move is always present in our minds. Village or community leaders play a very important role in the decision to move, but the majority of moves are made for the purpose of consolidating the power of the clan involved. In almost all respects, the practical aspects of Hmong moves in the United States are identical to Hmong movement to an already-occupied site in the past.

- Differences. In the past, we abandoned sites because of the infertility of the soil or because of the presence of disease. We chose new sites according to the quality of the soil, the absence of disease, the "luckiness" of the site and its closeness to the old site. In the United States, we leave sites where there are inadequate assistance programs, and where there is community tension. We move to areas where there are good social services available, where the cost of living is not too high, and where there is no community tension. Movement in the past usually involved the moving of a group of families, or sometimes an entire village; here, however, because of the high cost involved in supporting relatives, a move will be made family by family. The major problem of moving in the past—that of separation from family members and close friends—is not such a problem here, because of the existence of communication systems. The expense of moving, however, which was not so great in the past, is a very serious problem here in the United States.

LEADERSHIP AND ITS ROLE IN MOVING

Introduction

I have briefly mentioned the part that family, clan, and village leaders have played in traditional moving, and in secondary migration in the United
States. In this section I will discuss moving and leadership in more detail, and show how and why leadership patterns are changing. I will, in particular, show how the role of the clan representatives, which was not so important in the past, has become more and more important in the United States.

Leadership in Traditional Village Society

It is well known that Hmong village society was very well organized, with clan leaders and village chiefs. Clan leaders were chosen informally (and still are, in the U.S.); each clan that has more than five families chooses a single leader to deal with social and spiritual matters. If, in a village, a clan was not as large as five families, it was represented by the leader of one of the other clans. In the village where I was born, for example, there were four Yang families, six Thao families three Lor families, and fifteen Vue families. The Yangs and Lors were represented by the Thao clan leader.

The choice of a village leader was somewhat more involved. The heads of households would informally discuss among themselves, at ceremonies and social events, who should be the village chief.

The village chief had to be generous, and capable of dealing with social, legal, and spiritual matters. He also had to be a strong leader. Little Hmong boys were taught to love people, to be generous with friends and as hosts, and to be charitable to poor people so that when they grew up they would be good leaders.

It was a great honor and responsibility to be village chief. The chief had to oversee the security of the village, judge in any legal matters, organize social and cultural ceremonies, and make serious decisions like the decision to move the village to a better site. The village chief enjoyed great prestige in the village, and was known to the district chief. His family and clan increased in status; other clans were more willing to part with their daughters to him, and his own daughters could command greater respect as wives.
If a particular man emerged from the informal discussions as a likely leader to the majority of heads of household, he was formally asked to take the office. He would refuse the honor at first, but would allow himself to be persuaded; the honor given by village members to their chief was so great that a knowledgeable Hmong would not refuse.

The district chief (a Hmong who had been appointed by the Lao provincial chief) would then be notified of the decision of the village and would appoint the chosen man as head of the village; between 1960 and 1975, village chiefs were paid about $3.00 a year by the district chief.

The position of village chief was not for a set period of time. If a chief was not capable of performing his duties, and made wrong or unfair decisions, the district chief could be notified by a group of households, who would at the same time recommend another person. The village chief was therefore dependent on the good will of the village to keep his position; most village chiefs therefore were careful not to make wrong or unpopular decisions or they would lose their position.

Simple majority rule determined who was asked to be village chief. If one clan in a village had more households than the others, it was almost always the case that the leader of that clan was asked to be village leader. Sometimes, the minority clan members were unhappy about the choice of chief and would simply move to another village where their clan leader would have a better chance of becoming chief.

Other causes for dissatisfaction with the village leader sometimes arose out of disharmony between the village and the district chief. The district chief might appoint a chief against the wishes of some or even all the heads of households. Dissatisfied heads of household could, as I mentioned before, appeal to the district chief, but such appeals were not always successful. The district chief might be a member of the same clan as the village chief, or he might owe
him some favor. If an appeal was unsuccessful, it would be the cause for a move.

To illustrate the points mentioned above: in a village I visited when I was about fifteen, there were about twenty-five families, of which fifteen were Yangs, eight were Lees, and two others were Vues. The representative of the Lees was a very smart man, but a Yang was the village chief. The Lees and Yangs did not get along very well, and so all of the Lees moved to a nearby village where the Lee clan was also second in numbers—and where a village chief had not been appointed. A few months later, the Lee representative from the old site was chosen and appointed village chief at the new site, even though the Lees at the new site already had a clan leader.

It can easily be seen how clan power can be shifted around through movement from one village to another, and how clan leaders could use moving as a means of consolidating clan and personal power. If a village leader was unresponsive to all the people in his village, he would soon be without a village; conversely, a good village leader would gain in power as people moved from other villages into his.

Community Leadership in the United States

In an area in the United States where there is a small Hmong population, a community leader is chosen by the heads of families, pretty much as the village leaders were chosen in Laos. If the community forms a Mutual Assistance Association, the chosen community leader is formally elected the president of the MAA. In areas where there is a large Hmong population, the central MAA (Lao Family Community in Orange County, for example) serves the same function as the district chief did in Laos: the man recommended by the majority of the members of a community will be appointed by the central MAA as the community leader.

It is more and more the case, however, that the community leader is not turned to for help and guidance as much as the clan leader, even though the clan leader may live a long way from the community. A Hmong in
St. Paul, for example, would prefer to look for help from his clan representative in Seattle; even refugees in camps in Thailand look for help from clan representatives in the United States. A community leader will not be unseated in these cases; he will just be ignored.

I think this dependence on the clan leader rather than on the community leader is the product of several factors. First, when the Hmong were all brought together in Long Chieng and Sam Thong in the sixties and seventies, we had the first opportunity we ever had to group clans together in great numbers. In General Vang Pao's army, there were high-ranking officers from each clan; these officers became the clan leaders, and had a great deal of power and influence because of the numbers of clansmen who supported them. Support for major and minor clan leaders was kept and lost just as support for village leaders was—by attending or not attending to the needs of the clan members. Village leadership declined in these large Hmong towns; and the pattern of clan leadership continued in the camps of Thailand, where again large numbers of Hmong are gathered in small areas.

This confidence in clan leadership is carried over into the United States. Community leaders do not have the personal ties with the community that they did in villages in Laos; they do not enjoy the confidence and trust of many of their community members because they aren't known very well. A Hmong who does not have confidence in his community leader will turn to a leader he does have confidence in—his clan leader—especially since he can talk to the clan leader over the telephone.

Clan leaders have a great deal of power over their clan members, and can successfully ask them to move from one part of the country to another. A powerful clan leader on the west coast, for example, told a nephew of his to move from New England (where the nephew had a good job and had just gotten married and settled in) out west; the nephew moved within the week.

This power can be abused: I know a clan leader who told several households, who had been resettled all over the country, to move to a big city in the south,
where he would join them. They moved, but he discovered that he was happier in a city up north. He asked them to move again, but they were angry and refused. They elected another clan leader from among themselves and the original clan leader is now without much of a following.

Another example of abuse of power is the case of a minor clan leader who moved five families halfway across the country, in hopes of becoming the project director of a newly-forming MAA. He lost the election at the new site (there was already a well-established leader there); he moved back to the original site, but the five families couldn't afford to. He was ostracized both by the five families, and by his clan-mates in the original site.

Most of the time, however, a clan leader will carefully look at a site before he asks his followers to move with him; he is aware that he can lose the trust and confidence of his people if he moves them to situations that are worse than, or no better than, the original site. A major clan leader, for example, moved several families from different sites where they were having problems--sponsorship breakdowns, lack of welfare, and so on--to a central site that he knew would be better for them because he had a personal knowledge of the site. Another clan leader, who took a good job in a large city, told his followers not to join him because the social services in the city were not very good, but to join clan members at a third site.

CONCLUSION

I have tried to show that Hmong secondary migration in the United States is parallel to moving patterns in traditional Hmong society; that while the reasons for moving are quite different, the overall attitude towards moving is a chance to improve one's situation, and almost all of the practical aspects of moving are the same. I have also tried to show, in particular, how leadership is involved in moving, and how consolidation of clan power can form the motivation for a move which appears arbitrary to outsiders.
Acknowledgements

I am indebted to my colleague Barbara Robson at the Center for Applied Linguistics for extensive discussions on the subject of Hmong moving patterns, for instruction in the art of writing academic papers, and (obviously) for the editing of my English. I am also indebted to Nhia Dang Kue of Stockton, California, for telling me of his experiences as a village chief in Xieng Khouang and later in Long Chieng. I bear full responsibility, however, for the ideas presented in this paper. It will undoubtedly be the case that other Hmong have had experiences quite different from mine; nonetheless, I hope that the presentation here will contribute to the slowly growing body of literature on the Hmong.

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PART THREE

HMONG LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION
SOME AUXILIARY VERBS IN HMONG*

Marybeth Clark

AUXILIARY VERBS

It is not intended here to discuss the tense-aspect system of the Hmong language, but only to give an overview of the two most commonly occurring auxiliary verbs.

Auxiliary verbs, as described in this paper, are verbs which require following embedded sentential complements and which give aspeccual features to their embedded verbs. An auxiliary verb is the main verb of its sentence and cannot be preceded by another, higher verb. The term 'auxiliary' is used because of traditional use of this term for these verbs, but auxiliary verbs are not, as the name implies, in any way subordinate but are full verbs—the grammatical heads of their constructions.

The data presented is drawn from White Hmong, primarily that of Xieng Khouang province, but it appears that these verbs work much the same way in Green Hmong and in Sayaboury province, from whence some of the data comes.

Tau and Yuav

The two auxiliary verbs discussed are:

τau: 'have acquired, have been able to; having achieved the action or state of the following embedded verb: perfective aspect'; and

yuav: 'will acquire, want to; intention or prediction of the achievement of the action or state of the following embedded verb: anticipatory or expectative aspect.'
The sentences in 1-8 illustrate the auxiliary function of these two verbs as well as the definitions given for them. With each sentence there is a corresponding sentence without the auxiliary verb, to show the difference in meaning, if any. The structure trees in Figures 1, 3, and 6 give an idea of the grammatical structure of sentences with auxiliary verbs.¹

1) a. Nws tau mus nram moos Loob.
   3rd person got go below town Luang Prabang
   'She went down to Luang Prabang.'

   b. Nws mus nram moos Loob.
   'She is going / went down to Luang Prabang.'

   ![Figure 1. Structure tree for the sentence in (1)a](image)

2) a. Nws tau pw saum rooj-zaum tas hmo.
   3P got recline top bench done night
   'She slept on the bench all night.'

   b. Nws pw saum rooj-zaum tas hmo.
   'She's sleeping/going to sleep on the bench all night.'

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3) a. Koj puas tau rho tus pos hauv you whether got extract stick thorn inside 'Did you take the thorn out of her foot?'

nws txhais taw?
3P one of pair foot

b. Koj puas rho tus pos hauv nws txhais taw? 'Are you going to / did you take the thorn out of her foot?'

Figure 2. Structure tree for the sentence in (3)a

4) a. Koj tau mob plab los hov ntev you got sick stomach become how much long 'How long have you been sick?'

lawm?
already

b. Koj mob plab los hov ntev lawm? 'How long have you been sick?'

5) a. Hnub kaum peb lub hlis no kuv yuav day ten three bulk month this I will 'I'll return to Honolulu on the 13th of this

los Honolulu
return Honolulu
month.'
b. Hnub kaum peb lub hlis no kuv los Honolulu.
'I returned / will return to Honolulu on the
13th of this month.'

6) a. Koj tuaj txog lig mas kuv yuav muab nyom
you come arriving late then I will take grass
'If you get here late, I will have finished
txiav tag lawm.
cut done already
cutting the grass already.'

b. Koj tuaj txog lig mas kuv muab nyom txiav tag
'You've come late and I've finished cutting
lawn.
the grass already.'

The sentence in 6)b has a coordinate structure
rather than the subordinate structure of 6)a as shown
in the structure tree; that is, tuaj in 6)a is sub-
ordinate to yuav. The respective translations serve
to illustrate this difference in structure.
7) a. Kuv yuav txiav ntawm ib leeg ib qhov
   I will cut place at one person one amount
   'I'm going to take an amount of money from
   nyiaj.
   money
   each person.'

   b. Kuv txiav ntawm ib leeg ib qhov nyiaj.
      'I am taking / have taken / will take an amount
      of money...'

8) a. Peb yuav noj peb-caug, hnung tim 26 lub
    we will eat thirty (-th) day ordinal 26 bulk
    'We will eat the New Year feast this December
    12 hlis ntuj no mog.
    12 month this sure
    26.'

   b. Peb noj peb-caug hnung tim 26 lub 12 hlis ntuj
      'We will / did eat the New Year feast this
      no mog.
      December 26.'

   It is clear from these examples that, with few
   exceptions, the presence of tau and yuav disambigu-
   ates the tense aspect of the following verb.

   Tau can be reduplicated for intensification. In
   9) and 10) it indicates multiplicity of occasions in
   the past.

9) Nws tau tau mus nram moos lawm.
   3P got got go below town already
   'She has gone down to town many times.'

10) Nws tsis tau tau mus nram moos lawm.
    3P not got got go below town already
    'She has never gone down to town.'
In 11) tau tau represents an emphatic interrogative.

11) Koj puas tau tau rho tus pos?
you whether got got extract stick thorn
'Did you get the thorn out or not?'

Yuav cannot be reduplicated. Sentence 12) is ungrammatical.

12) Peb yuav yuav paub sau ntawv Hmoob.
we will will know write paper Hmong
'We will know how to write letters in Hmong.'

Some dialects or individuals allow yuav-tau as a compound auxiliary verb to denote obligation, as in 13),

13) Kuv yuav-tau kawm lus no.
I must study word this
'I have to study these words.'

but more common for obligation is compound auxiliary yuav-tsum, as in 14) and 15).

14) Kuv yuav-tsum hais qhia rau neb paub...
I must say inform to you 2 know
'I have to tell you two.'

15) Koj yuav-tsum rau khau rau koj txhais taw!
you must put on shoe to you one of pair foot
'You must put your shoes on!' (familiar)

Tsum and Muaj

Tsum is itself an auxiliary verb meaning 'must' as shown in 16), an example from White Hmong in Thailand given by Smalley (1976: 122).

16) ... tsis tsum nrhiav lev pua chaw.
not must search mat spread place
...'don't have to search for a mat to spread out.'

Again, yuav-tsum is much more common than tsum, at least in Xieng Khouang.
The verb muaj 'have, possess, exist' has, for some speakers, a corresponding auxiliary verb, meaning 'have been, perfective,' but this is unacceptable to other speakers. One speaker rejected another speaker's use of muaj in 17) but accepted it in 18).

17) Peb muaj los nyob ntawm no mas no no we have come stay place at this then cold cold 'We have come to live here and it's very very

li nawb.
so sure

cold!'  

18) Daim loj ntawd yeej muaj tiag-tiag sheet big that one from the first have surely 'That big piece has surely been with you all

nyob ntawm koj.
be? at place at you
along.'

The sentence in 18) might have been accepted because muaj in 18) may be perceived as an existential verb rather than as an auxiliary verb. This possibility is enhanced by the fact that nyob, though preferred, can be omitted, suggesting that nyob here might be a preposition instead of a verb. If nyob is a preposition, muaj cannot be an auxiliary verb.

NON-AUXILIARY VERBS

Tau and Yuav With Embedded Verb

Both tau and yuav have corresponding non-auxiliary verbs which occur as "ordinary" verbs in series; that is, they occur with embedded sentential complements but do not impose aspectual features on their embedded verbs. David Thomas (1971: 148) suggests that non-auxiliary verbs differ from auxiliary verbs in that "deletion of them destroys the truth of the sentences." Aspect in 19) and 20) is indicated by other elements in the sentences.

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19) Kuv mam li xa wb daim duab tuaj rau
I presently send we2 sheet form hither to
'Soon I'll send our picture to you for you to
koj tau saib.
you get look at
(have the opportunity to) see.'

20) Peb tab-tom yuav noj.
we just get eat
'We're just now eating.'

It may be that tau and yuav as non-auxiliary verbs carry a benefactive connotation, that is, 'have the good fortune of acquiring.' This is true for the corresponding lexical item in other Southeast Asian languages. Consider 21), which has a conditional aspect signaled by the copula yog.

21) Yog Peb tau nyob ua-ke, mas peb tau sib
be we get stay together then we get together
'If we could live together then we could talk
tham.
talk
together.'

In 22) tau is not an auxiliary verb and therefore may be preceded by auxiliary verb yuav.

22) Tej-zaum kuv yuav tau mus ntsib nkawd tag-kis.
maybe I will get go meet pair tomorrow
'Maybe I'll get to go see those two tomorrow.'

In 23) the first tau is an auxiliary verb but the second one is not and is preceded by auxiliary verb yuav.

23) Kuv tau hnov nej yuav tau tuaj nrog peb mus
I got hear youPl will get come with we go
'I heard that you're going to come and go with
txiav nyom.
cut grass
us to cut grass.'
Tau and Yuav With Noun

Non-auxiliary verb tau, as an agent-subject (that is, transitive) verb, can take a patient instead of a sentential complement. Some examples are 24) and 26)-28).

24) Kuv tau plaub tug me-nyuam/nyuj.  
I get four animate child cattle  
'I have four children/cows.'

In the Vietnamese equivalent of the sentence in 24), üçc 'acquire' very clearly has a benefactive connotation, shown in 25).

25) Tôi üçc bôn üça con. I get four individual child  
'I have (the good fortune of having) four children.'

26) Naghmo kuv pojniam tau ib tug me-nyuam. yesterday I wife get one animate child  
'Yesterday my wife had a baby.'

27) Tabsis tseem tsis tau tsev nyob xwb nawb mog. but still not get house stay only sure sure  
'We still don't have a place to live!'

28) Koj txhob xav li cas tias tsam tsis tau kuv you don't think as how that maybe not get I  
'Don't worry if you can't get my price.'

tus nqi.  
linear price

In 29) tau is reduplicated.

29) Kuv tseem tsis tau tau haujlwm ua. I still not get get work(noun) do  
'I haven't got (just can't get) a job yet.'

As a non-auxiliary agent-subject source-locus verb, yuav is more restricted than tau in its meaning of 'obtain, acquire.' One very specific use is 'obtain a spouse (with or without money)':

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30) **yuav txiv**  
'get a husband'  
**yuav pojnam**  
'get a wife'

A very common meaning of **yuav** is 'obtain with money, buy,' as in 31) and 32).

31) **Ob hnub no puas muaj neeg yuav kuv cov**  
two day this whether have person buy I group  
'These days is there anyone buying my needle-  
paj-ntaub?
stitchery
work?'

32) Yog nws nrog kuv yuav no, kuv xa mus rau nws.  
be 3P with I buy this I send away to 3P  
'If she buys this from me, I'll send it to her.'

Some Green Hmong speakers say **yov** for auxiliary verb **yuav**, but this pronunciation is never used for **yuav** 'buy.' This is shown in 33) and 34).

33) **Kuv yov/yuav mus yuav (*yov) ib daig ntaub seem**  
I will go buy one sheet cloth re-
'I'm going to go buy a length of remnant.'

34) Yog neeg haj tseem yov yuav paj-ntaub ntxiv
be person still still will buy stitchery more
'If people will still be buying needlework some
more.'

David Strecker (personal communication) suggests that the use of **yov** is a stress reduction from **yuav**, or that perhaps what originally was stress reduction has become a dialect identity form.

**Tsum**

Auxiliary verb **tsum** 'must' also appears to have a corresponding non-auxiliary verb meaning 'obtain, acquire.' Bertrais (1979: 475) gives two examples:
35) Kuv tsum ib rab riam.
    I obtain one tool knife
    'I have acquired a knife.'

36) Nws mus coj poj ni am tsis tsum.
    3P go fetch wife not obtain
    'He went to find a wife without success.'

In 36) tsum may be a resultative verb.

Resultative Tau

Tau can occur as an embedded verb which acts as a resultative: it signals the acquisition, success, or ability of the preceding higher verb. Examples are 37), 38) and 39).

37) Wb muag tau ntxiv lawm.
    we2 sell get more already
    'We two were able to sell some more.'

38) Muaj hmoov av ntau mas peb tawm tsis tau
    have dust earth much then we go out not get
    'There was so much volcanic ash we couldn't
     li lawm nawb.
     so already sure
     go outside at all.'

39) Nws mus yuav tau cov hlab siv lawm.
    3P go buy get group strand waist already
    'She was able to buy some sashes.'

A structure tree for 39), Figure 4, shows tau as an embedded verb, not the main verb of the sentence.

Resultative tau is common in tag questions such as the ones in 40) and 41).

40) Kuv muab rau koj lawm los tsis tau?
    I hand to you already or not get
    'Did I give it to you already?'

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41) Thov køj pab nqa los rau kuv puas tau?
request you help carry hither to I whether get
'Please help me by bringing it to me. Can you
do that?'

Without thov, the sentence in 41) could be more informally glossed as, 'Help me by bringing it to me, OK?' In 42), a. is preferred but b. and c. are also quite acceptable. They all mean essentially the same.

42) a. Koj hais lus Hmoob puas tau?
you say word Hmong whether get
'Can you speak Hmong language?'

b. Koj hais lus Hmoob tau los tsis tau?
you say word Hmong get or not get
'Can you speak Hmong language?'

c. Koj hais lus Hmoob tau tsis tau?
you say word Hmong get not get
'Can you speak Hmong language?'
Other Non-Auxiliary Verbs

There are other verbs which take embedded sentential complements, such as pab 'help' in 41) above and 43) here, and paub 'know' in 44).

43) Ntawm kuv cov paj-ntaub uas kuv muab rau place at I group stitchery which I hand to 'As for my needlework which I gave to you to

koj pab muag...
you help sell
help sell...

44) Kuv tsis paub pauv daim tshev no.
I not know exchange sheet check this 'I don't know how to cash this check.'

However, these verbs with embedded sentential complements do not impose an aspect on the embedded verb and they can be preceded by another verb. In 45) pab, with embedded verb muag, is preceded by the verb paub.

45) Peb tsis paub pab muag paj-ntaub nawb.
we not know help sell stitchery sure 'We don't know how to help sell needlework.'

In 46) paub, with embedded verb sau, is preceded by the auxiliary verb yuav.

46) Peb yuav paub sau ntawv Hmoob mus xyuas lawv.
we will know write paper Hmong away visit they 'We'll know how to write letters in Hmong to
greet them.'

Therefore, these verbs—in this case, pab and paub—are not considered to be auxiliary verbs, but what I would call regular verbs in series.
NOTES

*An earlier version of this paper was read by David Strecker and Stanley Starosta and I appreciate their helpful comments. For familiarity with Hmong language, I am indebted to my many Hmong friends who have continually encouraged my efforts through their friendly support and through conversations, letters, and elicited responses. Especially helpful have been Mr. Vangkoua Cheurtong, Ms. Yi Vang, Ms. Joua Vang, Ms. Tong Vang, and Mr. Cheng Lee, all White Hmong from Xieng Khouang; Mr. Neng Chue Yang, Green Hmong from Xieng Khouang; and Ms. Youa Yang and Ms. Sai Xiong, White Hmong from Sayaboury.

1. Sentence structure trees are based on a lexicalist analysis in which category labels are stated as features of lexical items rather than as node labels, and phrase heads are indicated by vertical branches (Starosta 1981: 53ff). Since phrases such as S, NP, and PP are identifiable by the category of the lexical phrase head (V, N, and P, respectively), all node labels are unnecessary. However, phrase labels are noted here for readability. Only those lexical features relevant to the discussion are shown. The following list of abbreviations identifies the names of the lexical features given in the trees.

A    adverb. Unless marked [+restrictive], adverbs follow the verbs they modify.
acqn acquisition (see note 2)
AGT  agent case relation
aux1  auxiliary (see note 3)
C    conjunction
cmpl  completive aspect
drved derived
LOC  locus case relation
N    noun
NM   nominative case form: grammatical subject
P    preposition
PAT  patient case relation
rslt resultative \([_\text{rslt}] \rightarrow [+[+V]]_\)
rstr restrictive. A lexical item marked [+rstr] precedes the item to which it is an attribute; i.e., a [+rstr] adverb precedes the verb it modifies.
sorc source
sttv stative
V verb
xpct expectative aspect

2. The feature 'acquisition' is not an atomic feature but represents a combination of features such as source, center, possession, etc. This representation is used here for simplification. A rule for deriving auxiliary verbs from non-auxiliary verbs which are marked for acquisition is hypothesized as follows, though further investigation may prove that auxiliaries can be derived from other than acquisition verbs.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{DR 1} \\
\begin{array}{c}
[+V] \\
+\text{acqn} \\
+\left[+\text{AGT}\right] \\
\alpha_F \\
\end{array}
\end{array}
\rightarrow
\begin{array}{c}
[+V] \\
+\text{drvd} \\
+\text{acqn} \\
+\text{auxl} \\
\alpha_F \\
\end{array}
\end{array}
\]

This rule states that an agent-subject (transitive) verb which is marked for acquisition may produce an auxiliary verb. For more features of auxiliary verbs, see note 3.

3. A verb with the feature [+auxiliary] has at least the features shown in redundancy rule 1.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{RR 1} \\
\begin{array}{c}
[+\text{auxl}] \\
[+\left[+V\right] \\
-\left[+V\right] \\
-\left[+\text{AGT}\right] \\
+\left[+\text{NM}, +\text{PAT}\right] \\
\end{array}
\end{array}
\end{array}
\]

This rule states that an auxiliary verb must be followed by another verb, cannot be preceded by another (higher) verb, may not take an agent case relation, and takes a patient subject.
4. In the structure trees here, the feature [+AGT] indicates that agent is obligatory in the environment of the verbs so marked. Actually, agent is an optional subject for agentive verbs: [+AGT]. Unless otherwise marked, verbs with the feature [-AGT] have patient subjects.

5. The gloss 'whether' for puas has been suggested by David Strecker (personal communication).

WORKS CONSULTED


------. (in progress). The two 'haves' of Hmong.


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SOME SECRET LANGUAGES OF THE HMONG

Maria Derrick-Mescua, Judith Berman, and Mary Beth Carlson

INTRODUCTION

This paper is a preliminary exploration of some types of disguised speech or 'secret language,' called lus rov ('turn-speak') in Hmong. Our interest was stimulated by a 1957 article "A Miao Secret Language," which appeared in Purnell's 1972 collection of linguistic articles on Miao and Yao in China.

Chinese scholars reported the existence of a Miao 'secret language.' Ai Ch'ing (1972) states that the method of phonetic distortion is to expand each syllable into two, so that /ko/'I, me' becomes /ky so/, /kau/ 'you' becomes /ky sau/, and so on. Between the initial and the vocalic segments of the syllable, y and s are inserted. The tone of the original, ordinary Miao syllable is reduplicated, so that both 'secret language' syllables have the same tone.

A second method is to insert a third syllable between the two syllables - the syllable /tça/ (meaningless) according to Ai Ch'ing, or the syllable /tçau/ 'to yell or cry out' according to Chu T'ing (1972). Thus, the word /ko/ becomes /ky tça so/. This method makes the 'secret language' even more difficult for the uninitiated listener to understand.

According to Ai Ch'ing, "this language is used exclusively by the local women that even their own husbands cannot understand a single word of it" (1972: 235). According to Chu T'ing, however, the secret language "is shared by a minority of both men and women in the community, not just by a few women" (1972: 237).

The examples of lus rov in this paper were given by three Hmong speakers from Xieng Khoang Province in eastern Laos.
Ngia Vang - 18; White Hmong man; single; nephew of Ka Thao; left Laos in 1978; in Thailand for 2 years; came to Philadelphia in 1980; speaks Hmong, Laotian, Thai, some French and English.

Ka Thao - 27; White Hmong woman; married; came to the United States in about 1978; speaks Hmong, Laotian, Thai, some French and English.

Pang Xiong - 37; White Hmong woman; married; came to Philadelphia on March 13, 1979. Speaks Hmong, Thai, Laotian and English.

At the time the data were collected (from May to August 1981), all the Hmong speakers were living in West Philadelphia and had worked as informants in a series of field methods courses on Hmong taught by one of the authors at the University of Pennsylvania. These courses were given from January to August 1981.

We wish to thank Ka Thao, Ngia Vang and Pang Xiong for their help in preparing this paper. They have been very patient and generous with their time while working with us on their language, both during class and outside class.

**PROCESSES AND VARIANTS**

_Lus rov_ consists of a set of processes which apply to every syllable of an utterance. These processes rearrange and/or expand the original syllables while maintaining the approved canonical forms of syllables:

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{Onset} & \text{Peak} & \text{Coda} \\
\frac{3}{C} & \frac{2}{V+T} & \frac{1}{N} \\
0 & 1 & 0
\end{array}
\]

C = Consonant, V = Vowel, T = Tone, N = Nasal Consonant

In our examples we have found four processes; these are:
1 - Metathesis;

2 - Partial reduplication of the original syllable

3 - Consonant and vowel suppletion - syllable partials resulting from process 2 are filled out with specified consonants or vowels to maintain syllable structure;

4 - Word suppletion - A complete nonsense syllable is added.

Either one, two, or three of these four processes can be used to produce a particular variant of *lus rov*. Further, in the simpler types, the original lexical items are included intact as part of the expanded utterance. In the more complex types the original lexical items are completely disguised.

Pang Xiong also demonstrated *lus rov* in English. In the example we obtained, the English is syllabified, and the syllables are then restructured to conform more closely to Hmong syllabic constraints. The *lus rov* processes then apply to these syllables.

The examples below are arranged from the more simple to the more complex, in terms of the degree of concealment of the original lexical items and the number of processes which have been applied to the original. In each example the speaker, the processes which apply (1 - metathesis, 2 - partial reduplication, 3 - consonant or vowel suppletion, and 4 - word suppletion) and a formula representing that particular variant of *lus rov* are given. Also included are a phonetic transcription and an orthographic representation of the original Hmong in the Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA), as well as a phonetic and RPA representation of the utterance in *lus rov*. The following symbols are used:

\[ C_1, V_1 = \text{Consonants and vowels in the original lexical item. If a syllabic peak contains two vowels, they are represented as } V_1 \text{ and } V_2. \]
/ua/, /c/, /tee/ = Consonants and vowels or syllables added by suppletion

〈〉 = Hmong written in the RPA orthography

( ) = Syllable boundaries in the formulae

[ ] = Phonetic transcription

EXAMPLES

• Speaker: Ka Thao

Processes: 1 - Metathesis of the syllable peaks and codas of the first and last lexical items in the utterance

Variant: \( C_{11} V_{11} T_{11} \ldots C_{22} V_{22} T_2 \rightarrow C_{12} V_{12} T_2 \ldots C_{21} V_{21} T_1 \)

Original: \[ \text{ku, mu to\' te:} \rightarrow \text{ke, mu to\' tu:} \]

(lus rov)

RPA: 〈kuv mus tom teb〉 \( \rightarrow \) 〈keb mus tom tuv〉

English: I go to farm.
'I go to the farm.'

• Speaker: Pang Xiong

Processes: 2 - Partial reduplication - of original vowel
3 - Consonant suppletion - /o/ added; tone suppletion - /tone s/ added

Variant: (original) + (/c/ + V₁(V₂) + /tone b/)

Original: \[ \text{syoy njo ge\' yua mu cua t\' si sai n2} \]

〈xyoo no nkias yuav mus yuav txiv sai no〉(RPA)
English: This year Gail must go marry very soon. 'This year Gail must go to get married very soon.'

Speaker: Pang Xiong

Processes: 2 - Partial reduplication - of the original consonant
3 - Vowel suppletion - /ua/

Variant: (original) + (C₁ + /ua/ + /tone s/)

Original: [ma lia kₒ yua mu ɻai ku njₒ njₒ ...]

This year Gail must go marry, mujuk nog yuav, nco nco... (RPA)

Variant: (original) + (C₁ + /ua/ + /tone s/)

Original: [ma lia kₒ yua mu ɻai ku njₒ njₒ ...]

This year Gail must go marry, mujuk nog yuav, nco nco... (RPA)

Lus rov: [ma mua lia lua kₒ kua yua ɻu ...]

This year Gail must go marry, mujuk nog yuav, nco nco... (RPA)
English: Maria you must go and I miss you a lot. 'Maria, you must go and I will miss you very much.'

Speaker: Pang Xiong

Processes: The same as in the example above, but in this case applied to English.

'English': [ʔai lai gou tu gei me  li]

I like go to get married

Lus rov: [ʔai ʔua lai lua gou  gua  tʰu  ...]

<aís uas laiv lua nkaus nkuas thus> (RPA)

[tʰua gei  gua  me mua  li  lua]

<thuas nkev nkuas me muas lij luas> (RPA)

Speaker: Pang Xiong

Processes: 2 - Partial reduplication - of the original vowel
3 - Consonant suppletion - /y/ added to original vowel
4 - Word suppletion - /toob/ or /teeb/ added

Variant: (original + tone m) + (/toob/ or /teeb/ + tone b) + (/y/ + V₁ + /tone b/)

Original: [ma lia kɔ yua mu ʔai ku njɔ njɔ ...]  

<Ma ria koj yuav mus ais kuv nco nco> (RPA)

[kɔ hɔŋ hɔŋ li]

<koj heev heev li> (RPA)
Lus rov: \[\text{ma} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{ya} \quad \text{lia} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{yia} \quad \text{k} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{...}\]

\langle \text{mam teeb yab liam teeb yiab kom toob} \rangle

\[\text{y} \quad \text{u} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{yua} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{mu} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{yu} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{...}\]

\langle \text{yob yuav teeb yuab mum toob yub aig} \rangle

\[\text{t} \quad \text{yai} \quad \text{k} \quad \text{ku} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{yu} \quad \text{njo} \quad \text{njo} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{...}\]

\langle \text{toob yaib kum toob yub ncom ncom toob} \rangle

\[\text{y} \quad \text{k} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{yu} \quad \text{h} \quad \text{h} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{yu} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{...}\]

\langle \text{yob kom toob yob heev heev teeb yib} \rangle

\[\text{li} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{y} \quad \text{i}\]

\langle \text{lim toob yeeb} \rangle

**English:** Maria you must go and I miss you very much.

'Maria, you must go and I will miss you very much.'

**Speaker:** Ngia Vang

**Processes:**
1 - Partial reduplication - of the original vowels
3 - Consonant suppletion - addition of /c/ and /l/

**Variant:** (original) + (/c/ + V₁T₁) + (/l/ + V₁T₁)

**Original:** \[\text{k} \quad \text{pua} \quad \text{mua} \quad \text{sia} \quad \text{d} \quad \text{pe} \quad \text{mu} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{...}\]

\langle \text{koj puas muaj siab nrog peb mus tom} \rangle

\[\text{te}\]

\langle \text{teb} \rangle
Lus rov: $[\text{koj coj loj puas cuas luas muaj cuaj}]$

\langle \text{koj coj loj puas cuas luas muaj cuaj} \rangle

$[\text{lua sia cia lia } \text{le } \text{mu } \text{cu } \text{lu } \text{ lu } ]$

\langle luaj siab ciab liab nrog cog log peb \rangle

$[\text{ce } \text{le } \text{mu } \text{cu } \text{lu } \text{tj } ]$

\langle ceb leb mus cus lus tom com lom teb \rangle

\langle ceb leb \rangle

English: You can like with us go to farm.
'Would you like to go to the farm with us?'

These first five variants all include the original utterance as part of the lus rov form. The next set of examples shows the variants in which the original lexical item is omitted.

- Speaker: Pang Xiong

Processes: 2 - Partial reduplication - of the original consonant; of the first vowel of the original peak, if it contained a vowel cluster; and then of the complete original peak
3 - Consonant and vowel suppletion - addition of /cov/ and /r/.

Variant: $(C_1 + /oo/ + /tone v/)(/r/ + V_1(V_2) + T_1)$

Original: $[s^y_{\text{oj}} \text{no } \text{gey } \text{yua } \text{mu } \text{yua } \text{tsi } \text{sai } \text{no}]$

\langle \text{xyoo no Gail yuav mus yuav txi sai no} \rangle
Lus rov:
\[
\left\lfloor \begin{array}{llllllllll}
\text{ʃy} & \text{ro} & \text{no} & \text{ro} & \text{go} & \text{re} & \text{yo} & \text{yo} & \ldots \\
\text{xy} & \text{no} & \text{no} & \text{no} & \text{no} & \text{no} & \text{no} & \text{no} & \ldots \\
\text{ru} & \text{no} & \text{ru} & \text{yo} & \text{ru} & \text{ra} & \text{ri} & \text{ri} & \ldots \\
\text{yu} & \text{mo} & \text{yu} & \text{yu} & \text{tx} & \text{ri} & \text{ri} & \text{ri} & \ldots \\
\text{so} & \text{ra} & \text{no} & \text{no} & \text{ro} & \text{ro} & \text{ro} & \text{ro} & \ldots \\
\text{so} & \text{no} & \text{no} & \text{no} & \text{no} & \text{no} & \text{no} & \text{no} & \ldots \\
\end{array} \right\rfloor
\]
\langle x y o o \ n c o s \ n c o o v \ n c o o v \ y e s \ y o o v \rangle
\langle x y o o \ n c o s \ n c o o v \ n c o o v \ y e s \ y o o v \rangle
\langle y u a v \ m o o v \ y u s \ y o o v \ y u a v \ t x o o v \ r h i a \rangle
\langle y u a v \ m o o v \ y u s \ y o o v \ y u a v \ t x o o v \ r h i a \rangle
\langle s o o v \ n c a i \ n o o v \ n c o \rangle
\langle s o o v \ n c a i \ n o o v \ n c o \rangle

English: This year Gail must go marry very soon.
'This year Gail must go to get married very soon.'

Speaker: Ngia Vang and Pang Xiong

Processes: 1 - Metathesis
3 - Consonant and vowel suppletion -/1/
and either /a + tone b/ or /ee + tone v/
are added.
/a/ or /ee/ are added randomly through-
out a phrase or sentence, but the last
word must end in /ee/.

Variant: \((/1/ + V_1 + T_1)(C_1 + /a + tone b/)\)
/ee + tone v/

Two versions of the sample sentence were produced.

Original: \[
\left\lfloor \begin{array}{lll}
\text{ku} & \text{hai} & \text{d} \text{ou} \\
\end{array} \right\rfloor
\]
\langle kuv \ hais \ rau \ koj \rangle

Lus rov: 1- \[
\left\lfloor \begin{array}{llllll}
\text{l} & \text{u} & \text{k} & \text{e} & \text{v} & \text{l} \\
\text{l} & \text{a} & \text{i} & \text{a} & \text{u} & \text{d} \\
\end{array} \right\rfloor
\]
\langle luv \ keev \ lais \ ha \ lau \ rab \ loj \ keev \rangle
2- \[
\left\lfloor \begin{array}{llllll}
\text{l} & \text{u} & \text{k} & \text{a} & \text{h} & \text{e} \\
\text{l} & \text{a} & \text{u} & \text{d} & \text{a} & \text{h} \\
\end{array} \right\rfloor
\]
\langle luv \ ka \ lais \ heev \ lau \ rab \ loj \ keev \rangle

English: 'I speak to you.'
Speaker: Pang Xiong

Processes: 1 - Metathesis
2 - Partial reduplication - of original consonant
3 - Consonant suppletion - addition of /l/; vowel suppletion - addition of /a/ plus /tone b/ and /ee/ plus /tone v/.

Variant: (/l/ + V₁ + T₁)(C₁ + /a/ + /tone b/)
(C₁ + /ee/ + /tone v/)

Original: [ku mu to? nio yau]

Original: ⟨kuv mus tom nws yau⟩

Lus rov: [lu ka keŋ iu ma menŋ lo ta ...]

Lus rov: ⟨luj kas keev luv mab meev lob dab⟩

Lus rov: [teŋ lio na neŋ lau ya yen]

Lus rov: ⟨deev lio nab neev lau yab yeev⟩

English: 'I go to New York.'

USES OF LUS ROV

According to the Chinese linguist who studied lus rov in Sichuan Province, only women were able to speak and understand it in the village in which he worked. However, a second Chinese linguist studying Hmong in the same town stated that lus rov was spoken by only a small number of people, but that this number included both men and women. This has been our finding also.

Lus rov is used, according to our three informants, by teenagers and young married couples from the ages of about 14 to 25 to keep their conversations from being understood by outsiders or older people. Both young men and young women speak it, and it is often used in courting. This situation may be changing
now in the United States; we were told that fewer young people are learning it now (see Appendix II).

On a recent trip to Portland, Oregon, one of the authors had the opportunity to discuss lus rov with some of the Hmong speakers working with researchers from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. One of the older women spoke briefly in lus rov, but only after all men, both Hmong and non-Hmong, had been asked to leave. This suggests that not only are there many varieties of lus rov within one region, but that sociolinguistic rules governing when varieties may be used also vary from region to region. The Hmong woman living in Portland was from the town of Kassa in the Say Bouri Province of southwestern Laos. The rest of our informants are all from Xieng Khoang Province.

Ngia Vang, the only male speaker of lus rov we have worked with to date, learned the secret language at the age of about 12 from his father. This contradicts the purpose of learning lus rov stated above, namely that of concealing speech from elders. However, the large number of variants that we learned from such a small number of informants may have been developed with the intention of generating new varieties not known to adults. Conklin explains the multiplicity of types of baliktad, a Tagalog speech disguise, in just this way; 'the basic range of types... has apparently remained about the same... (but) constant modifications are being made in the usage of various localities, small groups, families, and even individuals (Conklin, 1956: 139).

This seems to be the case among the Hmong also. Informal discussions with other Hmong revealed that each Hmong village may have its own variant of lus rov which is unintelligible to people from other villages. Therefore, a boy and a girl from different villages may encounter difficulties because they do not speak the same variant of lus rov.
APPENDIX I: A TEXT IN LUS ROV AND IN HMONG GIVEN BY NGIA VANG AND TRANSCRIBED BY NGIA VANG AND KA THAO

- Hmong

1 - 〈kuv nrog koj mus ua si〉
   I with you go play/hang out
   'I will go play with you.'

2 - 〈nej puas nrog peb mus tom teb?〉
   You(2) question with us go to farm
   'Can you two go to the farm with us?'

3 - 〈kuv hais rau koj〉
   I speak to you
   'I say to you.'

4 - 〈koj puas nrog peb mus ua si?〉
   you question with us go play/hang out
   'Can you go with us to play?'

5 - 〈nej tsis txhos dag rau peb; peb muaj siab...〉
   you-all not lie to us we like
   (have heart)
   〈nrog nej〉
   to you-all
   'Don't lie to us; we like you.'

6 - 〈peb yuav ua li cas nrog nej〉
   we question do how for you-all
   'What can we do for you?'

- Hmong Text (above) in Lus Rov

1 - 〈loj kab log nreev luv kab lus mab lua ab ...〉
   [lɔŋ ka ꚍ ndɔŋ lu ꚍ ꚍ koj ꚍ ma ꚍ lua ꚍ ꚍ ꚍ]
   〈koj nrog kuv mus ua ...〉
   〈li seev〉
   [lɪ sɔŋ]
   〈si.〉²
2 - \( \text{lej neev luas pab log nrab leb peeve lus mab ...} \)
\[
\text{[le ne lua pa in ndon le pej lu ma ...]}
\]
\( \text{<nej puas nrog peb mus ...>} \)
\( \text{<tom tab leb teev>}
\[
\text{[lu ta le ton]}\]
\( \text{<tom teb>} \)

3 - \( \text{luv kab lais hab lau rab loj keev>}
\[
\text{[lu kow lai ha lou qa [k [v kej]}
\]
\( \text{<kuv mais rau kow>} \)

4 - \( \text{loj kab luaj peeve log nrab leb peeve lus mab ...} \)
\[
\text{[lo ka lua pej ln qa le pej lu ma]}
\]
\( \text{<koj puas nrog peb mus>}
\[
\text{<lua ab li seev>}
\[
\text{[lua v a li sen]}
\]
\( \text{<ua si?}> \)

5 - \( \text{lej neev lis tshab lag deev lau rab leb peeve; ...} \)
\[
\text{[le nej li ta la dej lou qa le pej ...]}\]
\( \text{<nej tsis dag rau peb; ...>}
\]
\( \text{<leb peeve luaj mab liab seev laub rab lej neevo>}
\[
\text{[le pej lua ma lia sen [ta [a le nej]}
\]
\( \text{<peb muaj siab nrog nej>} \)

6 - \( \text{leb peeve luav yeev lua ab li cab}^3 \text{ log rab lej neevo>}
\[
\text{[le pej lua yej lua [v a [a le nej]}
\]
\( \text{<peb yuav ua li cas nrog nej?}> \)
APPENDIX II: NGIA VANG TALKING ABOUT THE USE OF LUS ROV; TRANSCRIPTION BY NGIA VANG AND KA THAO

1 - “Ib yam li thiab thaum uas nws muaj ib khub... one example when beginning it have one couple niam txiv uas txawm tshiab." 74 wife/husband? start new

'An example: there is a newlywed couple...'

2 - “Es lawv tsis xav pub lawv cov lus rau... And they don't want they clf. speech to leej twg paub." anybody understand.

'They don't want anybody to understand what they say...'

3 - “Los yos hais tias muaj ib khub hluas nkauj... and have one couple girlfriend hluas nraug tshiab." boyfriend new

'and a new dating couple.'

4 - “Uas lawv tsis xav pub lawv cov lus rau... Do they don't like they clf. speech to leej twg paub." anybody understand

'Don't want anybody to understand what they say.'
5 - (Mas thau'm ntawd lawv li mam lo siv cov ...
now there they will come use clf.
lus rov no.)
secret lang. this
'Now they will use this secret language here.'

6 - (Mas ua yam hais tias leej twg tsi ...
will do in secret speak talk other no people
muaj leej twg paub.)
have other understand people
'They will speak in secret and no other people will understand.'

7 - (Nkawd cov lu li.)
they(2) speak
'They speak...'

8 - (Thiab nkawd cov lus rov no mas yog ...
and they(2) clf. secret lang. this like this
ib cov lus siv rau tub hluas ntxhais hluas.)
one clf. speech use to boy young girl young
'and they two, the young boy and the young girl, use the secret language to converse'

9 - (Mas yog li ntawd lawv cov tub hluas ntxhais ...
Like this there they clf. boy young girl
hluas mas lawv nyiam siv heev.)
young will they like use a lot.
'All the young men and young women like to use (it) a lot.'
10 - <Lawv thiaj li kawm cov lus no.>
They start now study speak this
'They try to learn to speak like this.'

11 - <Los siv rau txhua. Lub sij hawm thaum lawv ...>
Come use to every clf. time when they
sib tham.>
speak
'They use it all the time when they speak.'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th><strong>Phonemic</strong></th>
<th><strong>Orthographic</strong></th>
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<td>c</td>
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<tr>
<td>sʰ</td>
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<tr>
<td>tˢ</td>
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<td>Voiceless tip dental affricate</td>
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<td>nasalized o</td>
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**TONES:**

- High: b
- High Falling: j
- Low rising: v
- Low: s
- Breathy: g
- Glottalized: m
- Mid: φ

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NOTES

1. There are discrepancies between the phonetic transcription and the RPA in some cases. The phonetic transcription is what the English speaking authors heard. Hmong informants listened to the tapes and wrote the RPA.

2. The speaker changed the order of the subject and the object of this sentence in the original and in the lus rov version.

3. This is our only example of a word which does not undergo all of the processes applying to the rest of the utterance.

4. տ is the symbol used in Hmong orthography to indicate reduplication of the previous syllable.

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AESTHETIC LANGUAGE IN WHITE HMONG

Brenda Johns and David Strecker

This paper is a preliminary typological survey of aesthetic language used in White Hmong prose, poetry, songs, ritual, and conversations. Many examples of aesthetic language are constructions containing words which can be omitted without rendering the construction ungrammatical or changing its meaning and which our Hmong teachers say are inserted to make the construction beautiful. For example, in the folktale "Txiv Nraug Ntsuag thiab Ntxawm Qaum Ntuaj" (Mr. Orphan and Ntxawm of Heaven) we find the sentence

Ya nroo tib ntws ua ntuaj tsaus tib ntais
fly onomatopo- onomatopo- make sky dark intensifier
poeic poeic

'Off they flew with a rumbling drone, darkening the sky...' (Yaj et al. 1973, page 5, lines 22-23.)

When asked the meaning of tib, one of our teachers, Tswb Vwj, replied that although tib sometimes means 'to pile up,' in the above sentence both occurrences of tib are meaningless and would usually be left out. By putting them in, however, the storyteller made the sentence sound "a little bit poetic."

Other examples of aesthetic language involve a seemingly redundant repetition of a certain word for example the verb kav 'to rule' in the expression

kav teb kav chaw
rule land rule place

meaning 'to rule a country.' The second occurrence of kav is optional since one can also say
kav teb chaws
rule land place

with the same meaning. (The orthographic change from
chaw to chaws reflects a change in pronunciation from
[cʰ realities] with mid level tone to [cʰ realities] with mid-low
level tone. This change is due to a tone sandhi
rule.)

The longer form kav teb kav chaw, appears to be
an example of aesthetic language and occurs in a pas-
sage which both we and our Hmong teachers find very
beautiful:

koj mus nyob rau puag pem
you go dwell at far up
sg.

ceeb tsheej mus ciaj huab tais
name of a myth— go be king
ical kingdom

koj ua lub siab dawb siab zoo
you make classi— liver white liver good
sg. fier

mus kav teb kav chaw
go rule land rule place

hlub teb hlub chaw kom koy tau zoo
cherish land cherish place so that you get good
sg.

Go and dwell far up in Ceeb Tsheej, go be king,
make your heart pure and good, rule over your lands
and your domains, protect and cherish your lands
and your domains so that you will prosper.
(Yaj et al. 1973, page 10, lines 37–40;
English translation ours.)

Expressions such as kav teb kav chaw, 'rule land rule
place,' are called lus ua txwm or 'paired words.'
Mottin (1978: 198) provides an excellent introduction
to the topic (our translation from Mottin's French):
Since Hmong is a monosyllabic language, it is possible to express oneself very briefly, sometimes even too briefly, so in order to embellish the utterance, one doubles the word or expression by adding on an extra word or expression which is similar. This is what we here call 'paired words' (lus ua txwm).

Expressions of this type are widespread in the languages of China and Southeast Asia. Other terms for them include: (1) 'elaborate expressions,' a term which Haas (1964 and elsewhere) has used for Thai and Matisoff (1973) has used for Lahu, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Yunnan, Burma and Thailand; (2) 'four syllable expressions,' or 'quadrisyllabic expressions,' a term which has been used for Hmongic languages (e.g. P'an and Ts'ao 1972). In the next part of the paper, we will sketch some of the ways in which paired words can be formed.

Paired words typically occur in four-part expressions in which the first and third parts are related in some way and the second and fourth parts are related in some way:

1 2 3 4

The relationships are of five kinds. First, the relationship may be one of identity, as in kav teb kav chaw, 'rule land rule place' = 'rule a country,' where the first and third parts are identical. Second, the relationship may be one of synonymy, as again in kav teb kav chaw, where the second part (teb 'land') and the fourth part (chaw 'place') are synonymous. Third, the relationship may involve some sort of semantic pairing or relationship other than synonymy, for example, iab 'bitter' and daw 'salty' meaning 'intense,' as in

khwv iab khwv daw 'arduous toil'

Toil bitter toil salty

Fourth, we may have what Matisoff (1973: 298) suggests calling 'bound couplet partners.' These are noted by
Mottin (1978: 198; our translation from Mottin's French): "... in many cases one of the two words seems to have been created solely to form a pair and cannot be used by itself (e.g. 'ki' is used only in the expression 'tub ki' = children)." Fifth, the relationship may be one of ablaut, for example the vocalic alternation o ~ e (phonetically [ɔ] ~ [e;i] or [ɔ] ~ [ɛ]) and the tonal alternation -j (high falling) ~ -s (mid-low level) as in

\[ ua \quad caj \quad ua \quad ces \quad 'completely' \]
\[ [-?ua \quad `cɔ` \quad -?ua \quad _cei] \]

Ua means 'to make, to do, to be as,' so the expression could be glossed literally 'do [`cɔ] do [_cei]' or 'in a [`cɔ] and [_cei] fashion.'

So far we have looked almost exclusively at paired-word expressions of the form ABAC, that is, expressions which consist of four words and in which the first and third words are identical, so that it is the second and fourth words which are the paired words, as for example

\[ kav \quad teb \quad kav \quad chaw \quad 'to rule a country' \]
\[ rule \quad land \quad rule \quad place \]

This is indeed the most common type but it is not the only type. First of all, it can be the second and fourth words which are identical so that it is the first and third words which are the paired words. An example is

\[ hais \quad lus \quad khawm \quad lus \quad 'to swear to a fact, speak word embrace (?) word take an oath' \]

We may say that teb and chaw form a word pair of the '...A...B' type and that hais and khawm form a word pair of the 'A...B...' type. That is, for teb and chaw the structure is ...teb ...chaw, with the blanks preceding teb and chaw, and various things may be inserted into the blanks. If we insert kav 'rule' we get kav teb kav chaw 'rule your country.' If we insert hlub 'cherish, help, take care of' we get hlub
teb hlub chaw 'protect and cherish your country' and so forth.

Conversely, the structure for hais and khawm is hais...khawm... with the blanks following hais and khawm, and again, various things may be inserted into the blanks. ²

It is also possible to combine a word pair of the 'A...B...' type with a word pair of the '...A...B' type to produce an interlocking four-syllable expression in which all four syllables are different. A good example is:

\[\text{cuaj phaj yim ntim} \quad '\text{a big feast}' \quad (\text{literally 'nine nine plate eight bowl plates and eight bowls'})\]

Here the paired words cuaj...yim... 'nine and eight' interlock with the paired words ...phaj...ntim 'plates and bowls.' This particular example of interlocking paired words is especially felicitous, we suspect, in that there is also a rhyme or near rhyme between cuaj ['cua] and phaj ['pʰa] and between yim [-ji] (the subscript tilde denotes creaky voice) and ntim [-ndî].

Finally, paired words may occur in expressions involving more than four syllables. The paired words themselves may be multisyllabic, as, for example, certain numbers used as paired words, cuaj caum yim txwm... xya caum yim txwm... 'ninety-eight pairs and seventy-eight pairs' = 'many.' Or the intervening material may be multisyllabic. Thus we have fairly long and complex examples of parallelism which seem to break down rather nicely into interlocking sets of paired words combined with other material. One of the more interesting and complex examples is a poetic way of saying 'your mother and father died when you were young' which occurs in 'Mr. Orphan and Ntxawm of Heaven'

\[\text{niam noj qe qauj niam tuag lawm nrauj} \quad \text{moth- eat egg failed moth- die COMPLE- separate er to hatch er} \quad \text{TIVE}\]
Qe qauj, literally 'an egg which failed to hatch,' and qe tov, literally 'an egg which is mixed with water,' both mean 'a rotten egg.' Thus there are three pairings here. The first is a pairing of the semantically related but non-synonymous words niam 'mother' and txiv 'father.' This is an extremely common pairing in Hmong. 'Mother' always comes before 'father,' the reverse of what is often the case in English. The second is a pairing between the synonymous expressions qe qauj and qe tov, both meaning 'a rotten egg.' The third is a pairing between nrauj 'separate' and ntxov 'early.' In this context they can perhaps be regarded as synonyms, both signifying that the parent died leaving the child behind.

The second pairing and the third pairing rhyme: qauj [ˈqau] rhymes with nrauj [ˈŋqau] and tov [ˈtɔ] rhymes with ntxov [ˈndɔ]. This, then, is an example of two different aesthetic devices, paired words and rhyme, working in concert. Our teacher Mim Yaj says that the second pairing, the two expressions for 'rotten egg,' is meaningless here and is inserted merely to rhyme with the third pairing. Mim says that there is indeed a Hmong idiom noj qe qauj 'to eat a rotten egg,' but that it does not mean 'to die.' It means 'to be forgetful.'

It can be seen from the above discussion of paired words that many levels of the grammar interact in the creation of aesthetic language. Researchers on Hmong aesthetic language and aesthetic language in other Southeast Asian languages have posed some of the following questions: Do elaborate expressions preserve the syntactic patterns of a language? Is elaborate language used more frequently in poetry and ritual than in 'ordinary language'? What special phonological processes can be used in the creation of aesthetic language? We have seen that paired words in White Hmong rely in part on rhyme, alliteration.
and sometimes even vocalic and tonal change. These phonological processes serve to enhance expressions already made elaborate by complex semantic pairings linking synonyms, antonyms, or words from the same semantic domain.

Bertrais (1978) has suggested that the process of pairing expressions is pervasive in White Hmong. He describes the way in which words, or even lines of poetry, are paired in traditional Hmong marriage songs. After listing several expressions under the heading 'associated words, double syntagmes, binary rhythm,' he notes

The words are thus associated so as to make up a multitude of constructions of a binary rhythm. For the binary rhythm is to be found in the use of the strophe and the antistrophe, in the imagery, in the characters which normally are two, the utensils, which will be two, the actions for which a parallel will always be found, etc. (Bertrais 178: 20)

Bertrais goes on to mention several instances of pairing in marriage song texts:

If, therefore, the singer speaks of the enclosure, 'lub vaj,' it will be expected that, at once, or just a little farther on, he will give a parallel expression comprising the house, 'lub tsev.' If one character does something with his right hand, 'tes lauj,' you can expect to have a parallel expression saying what his left hand does: 'lauj nas.'

Mottin (1978: 203) in addition to describing paired words and grouping them by semantic domains, gives several examples of Hmong proverbs, which consist of two lines, of which the first may not have any relationship to the second but which reinforces the idea of the second line. An example is the following

Pom tsov yuav tuag
See tiger will die
Pom nom        yuav pluag
See official will be poor

'The officials ruin us.' (Mottin 1978: 206)

This proverb shows two of the processes which we have said link paired words in elaborate expressions: (1) rhyme, which links tuag 'die' with pluag 'be poor' and (2) semantic pairing, which links seeing a tiger with seeing an official.

Paired words in White Hmong will repay further study. We have tried to give here a preliminary account touching on criteria that were useful to researchers looking at aesthetic language in an areal context. In future papers, we would like to go further; as P'an and Ts'ao did for many of the quadri-syllabic expressions in Qenao (Eastern Kweichow Hmong), we would like to investigate White Hmong examples in context and make a more systematic classification of Hmong, related languages and areal features.

Moreover, we need to learn more about the significance and relative aesthetic values of different kinds of pairings within Hmong culture. Our description so far has been an etic, foreigner's description, a typology of surface configurations. Fox (1974) in his work on aesthetic and ritual pairings in the Austronesian language Rotinese has gone below the surface and described the values of the pairings within Rotinese culture. We believe it will be possible to do the same thing for Hmong.

NOTES

*We would like to thank our Hmong teachers My Xiong (Mim Yaj), Ju Vue (Tswb Vwj), Mee Vue, Dao Xiong and Blia Xiong for their guidance in interpreting Hmong aesthetic language. My Xiong is from Luang Prabang Province in Laos; our other teachers are from Xien Khouang Province. We are responsible for any errors. The examples of aesthetic language cited in this
paper are drawn from three sources: Heimbach (1969), Bertrais et al. (1964), and Yaj et al. (1973). We write Hmong in standard orthography but at points in the paper where the pronunciation is important (for example, when we discuss rhyme) we have also given phonetic transcriptions in the International Phonetic Alphabet. We would like to dedicate this paper to James A. Matisoff and A.L. Becker, who taught us that aesthetics can be part of linguistics.

1 [More likely these are archaic words, retained only in idiomatic couplets -- ed.]

2 At least in theory, although the only example we have found so far is hais lus khawm lus.

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SPEECH SURROGATE SYSTEMS OF THE HMONG: 
FROM SINGING VOICES TO TALKING REEDS 

Amy R. Catlin 

Of the many varieties of oral lore which comprise the entire corpus of Hmong expressive literature, several are customarily conveyed to the listener by systems of musical representation which do not make use of the human voice. These "speech surrogate systems" employ a complex mixture of techniques which are not yet fully understood. Although performances by relative novices are common, complete competence in these techniques is limited to the rare specialist; similarly, Hmong listeners vary in their ability to comprehend the disguised speech genres. The present article will attempt to describe the fundamental principles underlying Hmong speech surrogate systems, and to offer some hypotheses concerning the purpose of rendering the base utterance ambiguous in such phonically "masked" performances. 

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BASE UTTERANCE 
(UNDISGUISED) 

Words. Hmong is a tonal language whose predominantly monosyllabic words are pronounced in seven basic tones and two alternate tones. Single consonants or consonant clusters begin each word. As many as 57 such initial consonants and consonant clusters exist in Blue Hmong and White Hmong, the dialects to be considered here; eleven vowels plus three nasalized vowels total 14. Final consonants are not found except in a few lone words from Chinese and other languages. These linguistic characteristics create a set of constraints and possibilities which must be considered whenever a word is sung or represented by using a musical instrument. 

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Poetry. Hmong secular poetry is spoken only while it is being taught. When it is performed, it is either sung or portrayed on various monophonic musical instruments. Ritual texts, however, are recited in some form of heightened speech or played on the polyphonic mouth organ geej.

Poetic Vocabulary. Secular sung poetry is subdivided by the Hmong into numerous specific genres, all of which employ a specialized poetic vocabulary called paj lus/paaaj lug (flower + word). These special words and phrases serve to enhance the shift to a realm of discourse where beauty of sound and expression are of heightened importance, and the listener must be familiar with such artful turns of thought in order to understand and appreciate the poetry. Similarly, ritual texts contain special words which replace ordinary ones. These substitute words, however, are used for more than aesthetic reasons, as their purpose is to disguise the communication in order to deceive the listening evil spirits. Thus the different audiences for secular and sacred poetry—mortals and spirits—provide constraints which help to explain their different vocabularies and methods of transforming ordinary speech.

Poetic Structure. Hmong secular poetry is organized into stanzas which are memorized, improvised, or spontaneously constructed by the singer using a combination of both techniques. A stanza may contain any number of unrhymed "lines" of non-specific lengths whose beginning and end points are not necessarily designated, but four rhymed lines provide the basic framework around which a perfect stanza must be built, according to the following scheme:

Initial Motive - Each stanza begins with a musico-poetic motive which helps to identify the genre being sung. This motive normally contains one or more long, high pitches sung to a text often having little or no lexical meaning.
Unrhymed Lines - Many lines of non-specific length may appear throughout the stanza. These lines may further the idea of the poem directly, as in narrative songs, or they may be loosely related formulaic filler material sung in order to emphasize the emotion expressed, and also to allow the singer to collect his/her thoughts while constructing an appropriate rhyming sequence.

Rhymed Lines - Four lines in each stanza should ideally contain rhyming words. These rhyming words contain the same vowel, but not necessarily the same word tone, and may occur anywhere from the middle to the end of a line. After the first two rhymed words occur, the same lines are sung again, but with the rhymed words replaced by another pair of rhymed words which do not, however, rhyme with the first pair. These substituted words may be synonyms for the words they replace, or they may be antonyms or words with similar but not identical meanings to the original words. The rhyme structure can be expressed in the following way:

Line A: Text A, containing word X to be rhymed in Line B.

Line B: Text B, such that one word X' rhymes with word X.

Line A': Text A' such that word X is replaced by substitute word Y.

Line B': Text B' such that word X' is replaced by word Y', rhyming with Y.

Concluding Signature - Every stanza concludes soon after the final line B' completes the rhyme scheme with a cadential marker. Frequently this marker consists of a rapid glissando to a very low sound of indefinite pitch, sung on a vocable such as "es" or "om." The same sound may be produced several other times throughout the stanza prior to breathing pauses, but it functions as a concluding signature only after the final rhyme word occurs.
These elements are illustrated in the following imitation of non-narrative Hmong poetry.

**Stanza 1**

**Initial Motive**  "Oh heaven..." (sung on long, high notes)

**Unrhymed Line(s)**  "My brothers and sisters, did you ever lose anyone you love across the ocean?"

**Rhyming Line A**  "My Bonnie lies over the sea"

**Unrhymed Line(s)**  "Will she ever return?"

"Sometimes I wonder why I spend the lonely nights dreaming of her voice"

**Rhyming Line B**  "Oh bring back my Bonnie to me"

**Unrhymed Line(s)**  "She went away so long ago, but still she haunts my memory"

**Rhyming Line A'**  "My Bonnie lies over the sky"

**Rhyming Line B'**  "Oh bring back my Bonnie, before I die of a broken heart"

**Concluding Signature**  "Oh" (glissando to low short note)

**Stanza 2**

**Initial Motive**  "Oh heaven..."

And so forth, with entirely new material.

In this English imitation of the Hmong form, unrhymed lines were deliberately chosen from other familiar "separation songs" in order to suggest the bricolage effect produced by quoting familiar phrases from Hmong songs within the genre category being sung.

The following transcribed Hmong text and English translation show the ideal form of a narrative stanza. In this case, two of the four rhyming words occur at the end of the line (A and A'). The reference to
Song of Advice to a Young Maiden
Who Has Gone With a Lazy Man

Why is it so this year, my sister Ngau Sheng?

My sister Ngau Sheng, with a flower
In your hand,
After eating the New Year Feast,
my sister Ngau Sheng,

Why did you go with the lazy bachelor?
That was not good, my sister Ngau Sheng.

Why did you go with the lazy fellow,
When others are diligent,

With a flower in your hand,
After eating the New Year Feast?

Others prepare their axes,
Joining the pieces together

And work in the fields to grow crops
Like the people on the hill across the valley -
But not your lazy bachelor!

Why did you go with him
With a flower in your hand
After eating the New Year Feast?
Why did you want to lie down
On the raised bed of wood

After he said, "My sister Ngau Sheng,
Whether we have food to eat or not,

Our fortune will be long, sister Ngau Sheng."?

Why did you want to lie down
On the raised bed of bamboo

After he said, "My sister Ngau Sheng,
Whether we have food to eat or not,

Our harvest will be long, sister Ngau Sheng."?

NOTE: Underlinings indicate rhymes, i.e. NTOO and HMOOV (final consonant is a tone marker and is not pronounced). These words are replaced by NRUAB and MUAB when the lines are repeated.

Ngau Sheng (Nkauj See) is a typical convention in love poetry, in which the beloved is often apostrophized as the moon or a mytho-historical character.  

THE DISGUISED UTTERANCE: METAMORPHOSIS OF WORD TONE IN SUNG POETRY

At the first remove from the base utterance, a poem may be sung in such a way that word tones are systematically transferred to a set of musical notes, subject to additional constraints due to the consideration of melodic features. Rhythmic elements are also important in identifying genres within this category of performance, but this subject will not be discussed due to space limitations.

Selection of Pitches. A poem may be sung to as few as four pitches, although five or more may be used according to the background and inclination of the singer. Regional, clan, and familial patterns have not yet been determined as significant in the choice of pitches, nor has the influence of fixed-pitch instruments been assessed, although it is reasonable to assume their importance in pitch selection. Commonly, one learns to sing by listening to adult family members or by receiving free or paid instruction from a relative or clansman.

The pitch structure of songs shows a considerable degree of individual variation, as shown in musical Example 1. Here, performances by 33 singers recorded in Thailand and Laos by Eric Mareschal (1976) have been reduced to their essential pitches and arranged progressively. Twenty-four of the singers were White Hmong, and the remainder Blue Hmong. Seventeen different pitch structures were found, only two of which were sung by more than three singers (shown in parentheses), indicating a high degree of variability. Since my own collection among refugees in the United States and Thailand still continues to discover new pitch "modes" regularly, this chart is far from complete, but it can be used to show variation within a limited sample.
Example 1.

Pitch Structure of Modes Sung By 33 Hmong Singers (after Mareschal, 1976).

Relationship of Word Tone to Musical Pitch.
Hmong was an unwritten language until French and American linguists devised the Roman Popular Alphabet (RPA) in the 1950s. In this system, word tones are indicated at the end of each word by tone markers according to the following scheme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone Marker</th>
<th>Tone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>high level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>full falling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v</td>
<td>mid-rising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- (no marker)</td>
<td>mid-level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>low-mid level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>low breathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>low glottalized ending</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Mareschal's research, word tones are distributed over available sung pitches in the following way:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Tone</th>
<th>Pitch (4-pitch system)</th>
<th>Pitch (5-pitch system)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>1(highest)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>4(lowest)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5(lowest)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Mareschal notes, and as my own research confirms, the distribution of word tone and melodic pitch does not follow this scheme rigorously, as these idealized "rules" are greatly generalized from practice. Furthermore, they do not seem to be verbalized or consciously conceptualized by most singers. For the most part, however, the b tone is sung on the highest pitch, and the j tone on the fourth pitch. According to Mareschal, the j tone is the most stable in its association with the fourth pitch, and is also the most stable tone grammatically; the v tone is the second most stable when sung. One of the contextual variables which upsets the rest of the system is most evident with Blue Hmong singers, who systematically avoid the repetition of any musical pitch, regardless of the tone requirements of the words. When asked, they sometimes reply "It sounds better" not to repeat a pitch during a song. Thus, the "rules" may be altered according to the individual's melodic sense, and Mareschal notes that the Blue Hmong are particularly extraordinary in their ability to juggle the tone-tune relationships (1976: 145). Nevertheless, it is the relative stability of the j, v, and b tones which provides reference points so that other words may be understood by context, often in retrospect.

The musical transcription in Example 2 of a fragment of a sung poem performed by Chia Chue Kue, age 68, who was born in the Nong Hieu region of Laos, demonstrates the variability of tone-pitch pairing.
Translation:

why year this girl       Ngau Sheng (vocale)
Vij xyoo nua ntxhais Nkaum See am?

you are want miss me     I    shy want miss(past)you (vocale)
Kaj puas yuav ncu kuv es kuv txaj yuav ncu lawm kaj es.

me know not know me hear not hear now girl Ngau Sheng (vocale)
Kaj paub tsis paub koj nov tsis nov nis ntxhais Nkaum See am?

Why is it so this year, young lady Ngau Sheng?
You want me and miss me; I am shy but I missed you too.
Do you know me or not? Do you hear me now or not, young lady Ngau Sheng?
The pairing of word tone to musical pitch in this excerpt is not completely consistent, as Example 3 shows. In general, however, the "stable" tones do indeed occur with relative consistency according to Mareschal's "rules." The "v" tone is thus paired with the highest pitch (1), either alone or preceded by pitch 2 as an appoggiatura (2-1). The "j" tone occurs only on the two lowest pitches, although the 5th pitch is supposed to be reserved for the "m" tone; in the phrase koj es koj the word koj is sung on the 5th pitch, however. This can partially be explained by the structural requirements of the three-part tune which is discussed later. Also, though, the word koj would be unlikely to be mistaken for kom, which has no lexical meaning.

Other instances of non-compliance with the "rules" can be explained by context, so that the basic hierarchy of tones is essentially preserved. For example, the occurrence of the word paub (know, understand) on pitches 2-3 rather than pitch 1 breaks a "rule" but in this case, the word paub is retrospectively disambiguated in two ways. First, the word is repeated in the same phrase but sung to the correct pitch (koj paub tsis paub: Do you know or not know?). Second, a parallel grammatical phrase occurs immediately after, which helps to suggest that paub is a verb (koj nov tsis nov: Do you hear or not hear?). There is only one verb which could be understood in this position, sung at pitches 2-3 and 1: pauv, to exchange, barter. It is more sensible to select paub rather than pauv since the gist of the poem and stereotyped Hmong forms of expression inform the listener to do so. Thus, the phrase paub tsis paub is disambiguated by several means, not the least of which is its own familiarity as a clichéd expression.
Example 3. Pairing of Linguistic Tones and Melodic Pitches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TONE</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>v</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>s</th>
<th>g</th>
<th>m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PITCH</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Tune Constraints. Purely melodic patterning processes also affect the pitch and text decisions made by the singer, as illustrated in Example 4a. Here, each of the three melodic phrases of the song excerpt shown in Example 2 are reduced following Schenkerian models. Large note-heads represent major structural points of beginning or arrival in the tune, while small note-heads designate the embellishing pitches, usually of shorter duration, which occur in the transitions between major structural points. The distribution of word tones over melodic pitch is indicated below the staff in Example 4b, demonstrating the relative degrees of segregation of word tones in the pitch spectrum.

What is intuitively clear to the listener is shown here by analysis to be true: a definite set of melodic and textual constraints is at work in the performance to create three arch-shaped melodic

Example 4.

a. Reduction of Melodic Features

b. Distribution of Word Tones
curves of remarkable similarity. In order to construct these contours, linguistic tones are juggled, and textual phrases are selected for their melodic value. For example, "Nkaum See om" is sung at the end of lines 1 and 3 (Example 2), creating the effect of a falling melodic cadence. To reinforce this melodic feature, the same pitch contour is created in line 2 by placing the first word of the next sentence before the rest: "... koj es. Koj (rest) ..." This rest follows koj despite syntactic illogic evidently in order to repeat the falling melodic cadence found in lines 1 and 3. Thus, there seems to be evidence for the effect of mode/melody/tune in the performance of sung poetry by the Hmong which deserves further study.

THE DISGUISED UTTERANCE: MASKING THE SUNG POEM

"Talking Reeds." Several Hmong instruments are used to portray the melodic outlines of a sung poem.

1. nplooj (leaf) - Usually from the banana tree. The leaf is placed curled back in the mouth and blown so that it vibrates. Pitch can be altered according to the skill of the player.

2. raj nplaim/raaj nplaim (tube + reed) - A free reed pipe with finger holes.

3. raj pum liv/raaj pum lev (tube + onomatopoeia(?)) - A fipple flute with finger holes.

4. ncas/ncaas - aw's harp, ew's harp, or guimbard, capable of producing multiple notes as well as vowels and some consonants.

5. qeej - Free reed mouth organ having six pipes.

6. nkauj laus ncas/nkauj laug ncaas (song + old + guimbard) (also, xib xov from the Lao) - Two-stringed bowed lute.

The first five on the above list are by far the most common and characteristically Hmong. All either
contain a free reed mechanism or are made of bamboo reed tubes. Because they are used in a manner reminiscent of the "talking drums" of some African groups to portray linguistic material, they are here called, as a group, "talking reeds."

The Process of Distortion. It has been shown that in performing sung poetry, certain phonological characteristics of the base utterance are altered: specifically, linguistic tones of words are somewhat systematically restructured in the transition from speech to song. Similarly, other distortions of the original phonological features of Hmong speech are effected in the transition from speech or song to vocal or instrumental representations of either. These distorting processes can be separated into four categories: 1) sung encrypting of words, 2) non-voiced speech modification, 3) instrumental abridgment of sung poetry, and 4) instrumental encoding of ritual texts.

1) Sung Encrypting of Words - The technique called lus rov (lus: speech; rov, to turn back upon) is one of many encrypting systems used by the Hmong for amusement or to preserve secrecy. In the form described by Mareschal (1976: 65) each word is divided into three parts: initial consonant or consonant cluster, vowel, and word tone. These elements are distributed over three words, in which the first word contains the initial consonant plus the vowel + tone "eeb" (pronounced "eng," high tone). The second word contains the correct word tone, and the third word contains the correct vowel, preceded by the consonant "x" (pronounced "s"). Other elements are left to the imagination of the singer. The following is an English example of the technique, in which final consonants replace vowel tone.

Base Utterance: "What did you sing?"

Encrypted: Wheng le_t sun/deng mad s11/yeng my sou/seng pong sit/
The words are sung to a set three-note melody, which would however defeat the attempt to preserve word tone in the middle word. Further study of this form of lus rov and other related forms must be done before the relationship of word tone to musical pitch can be ascertained.

2) Non-Voiced Speech Modification - The Hmong ncas/ncaas (guimbard, jew's harp or jaw's harp) is traditionally used almost exclusively by lovers for their secret and intimate courtship dialogues. At least one Hmong folk tale describes a young man who rescues his kidnapped beloved by playing the words "open the door" outside her place of captivity at night. In the village context, he plays outside the wall of her room in the darkness, and she can reply with her own guimbard or other instrument.

Like most Southeast Asian guimbards, the Hmong instrument appears to be derived from a bamboo model. It is made from a thin, flat rectangular piece of metal (copper alloy) in which a narrow incision separates the vibrating lamella from its frame. The lamella may be cut in one of at least three basic designs, having one, two, or three points.

The frame is held in one cupped hand by the handle and placed between, but usually not touching, the lips. The side in which the incisions have been made faces the player. The other hand strums the free end of the lamella in an outward direction. The resulting vibration of the lamella sets up air turbulence, creating barely audible sound waves. This turbulence is enhanced by the hairline spaces between the lamella and its frame. This feature is also present in free-reed instrument types such as the Hmong free-reed pipe and mouth organ; indeed, the guimbard is technically a very large example of a free-reed instrument.

The sound energy thus generated is then amplified and modified in the player's oral cavity, extended by his or her cupped hand. Tongue, teeth, and lips function to articulate the basic sound in
the same way that acoustical energy produced by the vocal cords is transformed into intelligible speech. Any vowel can be produced with the guimbard in this manner, and of the 59 total consonants and consonant clusters in Blue and White Hmong, only 12 are impossible to perform since they include bilabials, and the position of the guimbard itself makes it impossible for the two lips to meet. These un reproducible consonants and clusters involve the stops /p/, /ph/, /np/, /nph/, /pl/, /plh/, /npl/, /nplh/, and the nasals /m/ and /hm/ (White Hmong only). Players are instructed not to move their lips, which additionally eliminates the labiodental fricatives /f/ and /v/.

Melodic conveyors of word tones can be produced through careful manipulation of the oral cavity, and audible partials can be further controlled by choosing whether to strum or not to strum the lamella at the beginning of each word.

The use of "voice modifiers" by puppeteers has been described by Proshan as a reductive process in which the phonological repertoire of speech may be deliberately lessened, thereby producing impeded speech (1981b: 533). As it is employed by the Hmong, as well as some other groups in Southeast Asia (Huli of New Guinea: Pugh-Kitting 1977; Akha, Lisu, and Lahu of Northern Thailand: Catlin unpublished recordings 1980; Khmer: Proshan personal communication 1981), the guimbard can similarly function as a device by which the spectrum of speech distinctions is deliberately reduced, first through the loss of volume and articulatory efficiency, second through the loss of some consonants, and third by hindering the communication of word tone. Jairazbhoy has shown that puppeteers in Rajasthan can control the degree of intelligibility in sound communication using the boli voice modifier (1981: 51), and Proshan has formulated three means by which ambiguity can be defeated in disguised utterances (1981b). These can be applied to the Hmong situation equally well, and can be summarized briefly as follows:
1. The poetic structuring of linguistic material enhances intelligibility similar to Proschan's "dialogue" structuring of puppet conversations.

2. Non-verbal cues disambiguate masked utterances. Person (age, sex, history), occasion, and audience provide these cues, as well as gestures, such that "the speech is understood because it describes actions visible to the audience" assuring the communicative event (Proschan 1981b: 538).

3. The nature of speech is inherently redundant, containing far more clues than necessary, so that it is extraordinarily resistant to distortion (Proschan 1981b: 539).

These features can only be mentioned briefly here, due to the limitations of space, but they deserve close scrutiny. In the following discussion, two more levels of distortion in Hmong oral communication will be examined which carry the degree of distortion even further in "distance" from the original base utterance.

3) Instrumental Abridgment of Sung Poetry - Several instruments are used by the Hmong to mirror the melodies produced in performances of sung poetry, as already mentioned. The term "abridgment" is defined by Stern in his article on drum and whistle "languages" as a process in which "a suggestion of the total phonemic flow of sound in speech" (emphasis mine) is created, exhibiting significant resemblance to the sounds represented but preserving only a portion of the total phonemic elements (Stern 1976: 125-126). In this case, the instruments reproduce melodic contours, but they are not capable of duplicating vowel and consonant features of speech. Nevertheless, Hmong invariably claim that sung poetry can be understood when imitated on these instruments, and can demonstrate the process impressively. Individuals who have been trained to sing and play are most expert at understanding such disguised utterances, but the methods of melodically portraying songs are not universal, being subject to regional
and individual variation; therefore, even "experts" may not comprehend a performance by a musician who comes from a different region, or whose style is idiosyncratic.

Instruments in this category are the free reed pipe (raaj mplaim/raaj nplaim), fipple flute (raaj puv lib), leaf (nplooj), and two-stringed violin (nkauj paus ncas).

The following examples show the beginning of a raaj nplaim performance by a knowledgeable young Blue Hmong musician. Afterwards, my assistant Khu Khang, also Blue Hmong, wrote his interpretation of what the imagined text had been, as he claimed to understand the performance. He used the tape recorder, painstakingly listening and re-listening until he produced a written text (Version 1 in Example 5) with which he was satisfied. Next we gave the tape recording to the performer and asked him to write down the text he had been thinking, after listening three or four times to the recording. This resulted in Version 2 (Example 6), which he said was accurate. Finally, another bilingual, also Blue Hmong, and related to the musician, listened to the tape repeatedly in order to transcribe the text. At first he was satisfied with his results, but eventually he decided to throw away his manuscript and begin again with the musician at his side. For several hours they labored with the tape, in the end producing text Version 3 (Example 7) they agreed was correct.

Meanwhile, I had prepared a musical transcription of the entire performance written in staff notation. The first two versions of the text obviously did not correspond to the transcribed melody in "correct" melodic shape according to Mareschal's "rules," nor did the number of syllables per phrase tally with the recording. The third version, however, corresponded exactly with the transcribed melody in both respects.
Example 5

Version I: Raaj nplaim solo played by Yao Yang, "transcribed" by Khu Khang

Ntu ñis Hmoob yuav tsis teb raws chau txag raj teb rooj ntug deb es
Yuav kho stlab ua luaj no es
Yuav nhav ntuñ qus lug es puas kho koj stlab os Hmoob es
Yuav tseeg tauleej kwj leej tig raj tom qab es
Yuav miw leej kwj leej tig ua luaj no os Hmoob om
Es tuaj txag rab teb rooj tug no es yuav tshav ntuñ qa lug es
Yuav ciaj los quav tuag os Hmoob.
Yuav tuaj txag rab teb no los tsis muaj kw tsis muaj tig es
Yuav kho stlab ua luaj li no Hmoob es
Nej paub las tsis paub os Hmoob om.

Translation:

Oh heaven, we Hmong did not want to flee from our country to a new country.
So far that we can no longer see our land
We hear the birds singing, they fly in the sky
They make us feel so lonely
The sun is shining brightly
Are you as lonely as I am, or not?
I still have relatives back in my native country
I miss them more than most people can miss anyone.
My life in this country is sunny; it makes me feel like asking,
"Should I continue to live or is it better to die?"
I have no parents or relatives, only myself alone
Do you know how lonely I am?
Example 6

Version II: Raaj nplaimsole played by Yao Yang "transcribed" by himself

Ntuaj os, kawj xwb khiaj tuaj txog rab teb no es.
Tsis muaj niam tsis muaj txiv tso pluav tseg es.
Yuav nko siab ua luaj no.
Khiav tuaj tsog reeb teb no nis muab leej kww leej tig tso tseg es yuav nko.
Suab uam no es yuav cia los yuav tuag os hmoob es.
Tuaj txog rab teb no es nej muaj niam muaj tsiv es
Tsis kho nej siab es peb tsis muaj niam tsis muaj txiv es yuav kho kho peb siab.
Maj no es tsis pom qab mus qiaj leej twg.

Translation:

Oh heaven, my girlfriends, we escaped to arrive in this country
We have no parents, we abandoned them. We are very lonely.
Now we have arrived in this country where we have no relatives
We are very lonely. more than anyone else.
Should we die or live? Oh Hmong people..
In this country the others have parents. relatives. cousins. so they aren't lonely
We ourselves have none. so we are very lonely.
We are lonely because we don't see our relatives for they were left behind.
We do not know how to express how lonely we are.
Example 7

Version III: Raaj nplaam, "transcribed" by the performer and Doua Yang

Ntuj...nis me ntjhals nkauj xwb.
Oh heaven, maidens,
Nlm khiav tua] txog rab teb no es.
We fled from our land to this country
Kuv nim muab kuv leej niam leej txiv,
I have no parents.
Leej kww leej tii tso pov tseg es
Relatives were abandoned.
Cas yuav nco leej niam leej txiv ua lua] no os
We really miss our parents so much
Lawv tej Hmoob yuas om.
You Hmong people, do you feel so?

Kuv yuav tua] txog rab teb no
I had to come to this land.
Tsi muaj kww muaj tii es
Without younger or older brothers
Ntam kab niam noog quaaj es
The insects and birds are singing
Cas yuav kha kuv stab ua lua] no
I am so homesick, so much
Cuaj Il yuav tua] yuas kww es om.
It is like dying

Cia nej muaj niam muaj txiv es
You people have parents
Tsi kho nej stob li peb yuas
You are not lonely like me.
Tsi] leej tub tsi] muaj niam muaj tsi]v,
I am a young man without parents
Mua] kww muaj tii li kuv no es
I have no relatives
Yuav tsi] pam qab mus hais qhia leej twg
But I do not know how to tell anyone
Yuas niam yai...om.
Oh...

As performed:
In comparing the three text versions, it is important to note that the translations agree as to general subject matter, with even some agreement as to exact meanings. All three were considered by both the performer and the listeners to be successful interpretations of the message being conveyed. Thus, the gist, as well as many specific elements, were conveyed to the satisfaction of the transmitter as well as the receivers, although close scrutiny shows that the exact linguistic content of the message was not perceived. Further discussion and analysis of the process will have to appear in a subsequent article, due to limitations of space.

Instrumental Encoding of Ritual Texts. The free reed mouth organ qeej is capable of producing complex polyphonic sound patterns which represent ritual texts performed during specific times, virtually continuously, during the three to six day Hmong funeral rites. Other compositions without verbal significance are played on the same instrument to accompany the musician's acrobatic dances designed to entertain the soul of the dead person during lapses in the ceremonies, or to impress spectators on social occasions such as the New Year festival. The funeral texts are understood by those people who have been schooled in the performance and memorization of qeej ritual texts, but the spirit world is also believed to be capable of comprehending its messages, which instruct the soul in its journey through the twelve heavens. According to Mareschal, the correspondence of linguistic tone to musical tone in qeej compositions is still basically the same as that found in sung poetry, but because the musical setting is polyphonic, the listener must know in advance which tone to listen for in each chord, since only one tone represents each word. Thus, the overall sound pattern no longer mirrors that of sung poetry in the manner found in instrumental abridging systems. Instead, an encoding system appears to be employed, such that the listener must know the code before he can interpret the sounds heard, since encoded messages exhibit "no essential physical similarity
between the sign and the sound it represents" (Stern 1976: 125) as do abridging systems. Furthermore, the listener must first know the text and its conventional melodic setting in order to find it, because it is embedded in the surrounding polyphony with no clue as to which pitch is the conveyor of the linguistic message. Therefore the message is actually encoded and then disguised in a web of polyphony.

Why Distort? In discussing the use of voice modifiers which generally cause impeded speech and comprehension, Proschan (1981b: 546) offers several explanations for intentional ambiguity, using examples culled from various puppetry traditions. After Bateson and Goffman, he calls the distorting process a metacommunicational framing device by which actions are set apart as distinct from reality. Similarly, the Hmong distorting techniques each superimpose a unique grid upon the sounds and actions to be interpreted, marking them all by stating "This is a performance," as well as more specifically labelling an event as courtship or ritual behavior. In this way, the lover is protected from possible embarrassment, because if rejection should result, it was his song which wooed rather than his self. Indeed, Hmong people consistently state that "shyness" is the reason for playing an instrument rather than speaking directly to the beloved. By extension, perhaps the performing arts can be seen as employing various types of metacommunicational framing devices which function not only to set art apart from reality, but also to protect the "self" of the performer by linking him to the greater community of lovers and singers of love songs.

The framing explanation, however, only partially satisfies the question, because framing can also be effected without ambiguating speech. Secrecy is preserved through distortion in both secular and sacred contexts, and appears to be a major contributing factor in the choice to distort. Indeed, the volume of a guimbard is no greater than a whisper,
and other courtship instruments must be studiously attended before they can be "understood." Thus, through selective inattention, either intentional or accidental, casual sharers of the same space with the lovers can be bypassed, preserving the privacy of the message in villages without soundproofed quarters.

Another explanation hinges upon the fact that Hmong musicians commonly perform in villages other than their own for both courtship and ritual purposes. Since dialects vary from region to region, the conventions of paj lus/paaj lug and "talking reeds" may function partially as a lingua franca does. This need not contradict the fact that other stylistic idiosyncrasies of each sub-tradition may impede understanding of some elements by outsiders. Proschan posits a similar explanation for speech distortion by puppeteers, proposing that such itinerant performers may need a lingua franca which is "partially understood by many, fully understood by none" in their often multi-lingual performances (Proschan 1981b: 546). Translation or interpretation is often provided in such cases, which is also true for Hmong performances I have seen in both bilingual and monolingual settings. In this way, the performance functions as an invitation for dialogue between performer and audience and among audience members, much as distorted and/or foreign words sung at the opera function as a conversation-starter between spectators.

CONCLUSION

It has been shown that Hmong performers employ techniques of distortion classified here into five levels of distance from the base (spoken) utterance in their music.

1. Word tone metamorphosis in sung poetry (kwv txhiaj/lug txhaj)

2. Sung encrypting of words in secret code messages (lus rov/lug rov)
3. Non-voiced speech modification in guimbard play (ncas/ncaas)

4. Instrumental abridgment of sung poetry in reed and string music (raj nplant/raj nplant)

5. Instrumental encoding of ritual texts in mouth organ music (geej)

The most important reasons cited for using these techniques of distortion are ambiguation, secrecy, and framing. It is hoped that further research will address many important issues raised in this preliminary study, including aesthetic problems related to affect and the implications of acculturation in Hmong communicative forms.

NOTES

*I would like to thank Frank Proschlan for offering many helpful suggestions in the preparation of this article, as well as John Emigh, Jean Mottin, Fred Lieberman, and the Hmong who have given information and help with translations: Chia Chu Kue, Yangsi Koumarn, Doua Yang, Pheng Vang, Ye Xiong, and Khu Khang.

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1. In this paper, Hmong words will be written following the Roman Popular Alphabet system (Heimbach 1969) in which double vowels indicate nasalization and tone markers at the ends of words indicate word tone (b, j, v, -, s, g, m, d). White Hmong words will be written first, followed by a slash and the Blue Hmong equivalent if any, since these are the two most prevalent dialects of Hmong found in the United States.

   Ex: "Hmong": hmoob/moob
2. Ngau Sheng (Nkaum See, Nkauj See, also called Ngau La) is said to have been the first leader of the Hmong. She was extremely beautiful and intelligent, for which she was hated by the other kings of the earth, especially the Chinese. She did not want to marry, but her people convinced her to take the hand of a Chinese prince in order to unite the Hmong and the Chinese. It is said that the Chinese then learned many Hmong techniques and beliefs from her and her people, after which they killed her and used their newly acquired knowledge to weaken and dominate the Hmong. Ever since, Hmong men have competed for leadership of the entire tribe, but without success. Many have died in the ensuing battles for kingship, and others have migrated to other countries to escape these conflicts. Different areas of China, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and various Western countries have become their homes, and the Hmong still have not been able to achieve unified leadership since the days of Ngau Sheng. (Story told by Chia Chue Kue and Doua Yang, Providence Rhode Island, December 1981).

WORKS CONSULTED


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PART FOUR

LANGUAGE LEARNING ISSUES
HMONG LITERACY, FORMAL EDUCATION, AND THEIR EFFECTS ON PERFORMANCE IN AN ESL CLASS

Barbara Robson

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to report the findings of a research project conducted with Hmong subjects in Ban Vinai, the Hmong refugee camp in Loei Province, Thailand. The project was funded by the Asia Foundation, at the request of the U.S. Department of State; its goal was to determine the effects of Hmong literacy in a Roman alphabet on student performance in a three-month English as a second language (ESL) and cultural orientation (CO) program.

The research project centered on one three-month cycle of a program run by a consortium consisting of the Experiment in International Living, World Education, Inc., and the Save the Children Federation. This program, like others set up in refugee camps in Southeast Asia in 1980-81, was funded by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and was to teach intensive survival English and cultural orientation to life in America to refugees who had been accepted for resettlement in the United States. Refugee students in the ESL/CO program were registered for the research project at the beginning of January 1980; at the end of the program they were tested in various aspects of English. The progress of students who were able to read Hmong at the beginning of the program was compared with the progress of those who were not; an additional variable—whether or not the student had had formal education—was also studied.
Registration in January 1981

The relevant cycle of the Consortium's ESL/CO program started in January, and we had obtained permission to test the refugees who signed up for classes. I was, accordingly, at Ban Vinai January 12th-16th, the week that registration for the classes took place.

Students registered for the ESL/CO program by filling out (or having one filled out for them) an information card, and by taking a very simple placement test, in which their knowledge of English and their ability to write in Lao, Hmong, Thai or English was roughly judged.

As the students finished registering for the ESL/CO program, they registered for this project. In addition to collecting enough information so that the student could be located afterwards, I asked for information on previous education. Had the student been to school before? Where? And for how long? Could the student read Lao? Could the student read Hmong?

I also gave a simple test for ability to read Hmong: passages of differing levels of difficulty were read aloud by the student, whose performance was given a score by the interviewer.

The data sheets and the Hmong reading tests had all been prepared and translated in advance, with assistance from fellow Center for Applied Linguistics staff member Cheu Thao.

All the interviewing was done in Hmong, by Hmong assistants whom I had trained both to collect the personal data and to give and score the reading tests. One of these assistants, Vue Tcher, was a teacher in the Hmong literacy program. The information he provided with regard to giving and scoring the Hmong reading test was invaluable; and his
presence, indicating as it did support for the proj-
et on the part of a person of relative prestige at
Ban Vinai, assured the collection of more accurate
personal data than Hmong typically give to outsiders.

A sample data sheet (with interlinear transla-
tions) is given in Appendix A. All together, 114
subjects were registered. Subsequent analysis of the
data sheets showed that the subjects could be grouped
according to the presence or absence of formal educa-
tion, defined as education in a school in Laos, and
according to the presence or absence of the ability
to read Hmong. (We tested only in RPA, the Roman al-
phabet that is taught in the Hmong literacy program
at Ban Vinai and is used--to the near-virtual exclu-
sion of all other alphabets--by Hmong refugees in
western countries. The other alphabets for Hmong
taught at camp are all non-Roman.)

The 114 subjects divided into groups as follows:

A. -Education, -Hmong literacy: 48
B. -Education, +Hmong literacy: 12
C. +Education, -Hmong literacy: 25
D. +Education, +Hmong literacy: 29

The existence of subjects who had never been to
school but who could read Hmong, as opposed to those
who had been to school but who could not read Hmong,
has allowed testing for the effects of native-language
literacy separate from the effects of previous formal
education--something very few literacy studies have
been able to do, as literacy is virtually always a
result of formal education.

The Consortium's ESL/CO Program

The January-April cycle of the Consortium's pro-
gram turned out to be the last offered at Ban Vinai;
the Hmong were not signing up to go to the United
States in any great numbers, and attendance in the
December-March cycle of classes had been sporadic, so
it was decided to move the consortium program down
to the refugee processing center in Chonburi. At the end of March, therefore, the majority of Consortium staff moved, leaving a skeletal crew of administrators and teachers behind to finish out the January-April cycle.

The 114 registrants were divided into classes according to level of English, as determined by the oral English part of the placement test. Beginning students were further subdivided according to level of literacy as determined by their performance on the writing part of the placement test. Six classes were formed: two low beginning (non-literate students with no English), two high beginning (students literate in something, with no English), one intermediate and one advanced. I was told in April that the intermediate and advanced classes turned out to be quite similar.

The classes were taught by American teachers with varying amounts of experience and formal training in ESL; these teachers were supervised by two master teachers. There were three Hmong aides.

I explained the broad outlines of my project to the teachers and administrators while I was there, but did not go into detail; I also did not share with them the information on each subject that I had collected, although I transferred scores from their placement test to my data sheets. The Consortium staff therefore did not know how I was grouping their students, and their grouping of students did not correlate with mine, based as it was primarily on level of English, a criterion I ignored.

**Testing in April**

The January-April cycle was scheduled to end April 17th; I therefore arranged with the Consortium administrators to conduct tests the week of April 13th-17th, having gone up to Ban Vinai on April 10th to make arrangements and train monitors. The Consortium's master teacher Erica Hagen and I conducted the testing; we gave the tests to two Consortium classes
at a time; testing took an entire morning or afternoon. We tested the low beginning classes Monday morning; the high beginning classes Tuesday morning; and the intermediate and advanced classes Wednesday afternoon. I am fairly confident that there was no passing of information about the tests from class to class; testing classes in order from low to high ensured that students who had the tests first did not take enough of the tests to pass on useful information to the students in higher levels.

Each student took five tests: English comprehension, English reading, English oral production, Hmong reading, and Hmong writing. Samples of the tests are presented in Appendix B. The English comprehension, English reading, and Hmong writing tests were administered to the students in groups, with close monitoring by English-speaking Hmong aides. The English oral production and Hmong reading tests were given to students one by one.

1. The English Comprehension Test. We gave the Ann and Ben Listening Test, a test developed by the Oregon Indochinese Refugee Program. This test was designed to circumnavigate the special problems inherent in testing non- or newly-literate ESL students. It utilizes visuals, simple line drawings which are taught to the students in their native language as an integral part of the test (which eliminates cross-cultural problems in interpreting visuals). The test is multiple-choice: an English sentence is read out loud by the test-giver, and the student must mark one picture of three which best corresponds to the sentence. The student is not required to read or write in order to answer questions correctly. The test is three-part: the first part teaches the student how to mark the pictures, reiterating in English the material about the visuals that has been taught in the native language. The second part requires the student to choose a correct picture among alternatives, but includes only one sentence the student has not previously had explained in the native language. The third part presents all new test material.

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Erica Hagen gave the comprehension test to all classes. All students took the first two parts. The intermediate and advanced classes took part III as well. The recorded score for a particular subject consists of his or her score on parts II and III; a score of 40 or more indicates that the subject got one or more correct answers on material that had not been previously explained or translated. Throughout the test, students were carefully monitored, to prevent "cheating," and to make sure that everyone was marking the appropriate set of pictures and turning the pages at the right time and so on.

2. The English Reading Test. The reading test was an adaptation of the Ann and Ben Listening Test and utilized the same visuals and format. The reading test was in all cases given immediately after the comprehension test, so the students would not have time to forget what the visuals were about. The test was in three parts and differed from the listening test only in that the student had to read the sentences rather than listen to them; the student did not have to write English in order to answer a question correctly. While the same English content was tested in the comprehension and reading tests, and the same visuals were used, the actual test items differed from the comprehension to the reading test.

I gave the reading test to all classes. Students were allowed to work through the three parts of the test at their own speed. They were also allowed to decide whether they wanted to take parts II and III; almost none of the low beginning students got past part I, whereas all of the intermediate/advanced students took all three parts. Instructions for the test were given in English, then translated into Hmong, and the students were monitored by the Hmong aides.

An individual subject's score on the reading test is the sum of his or her scores on all parts of the test. Any score higher than zero indicates that the subject read and understood material that had not been previously explained or translated.
3. The English Production Test. This test consisted of a pretest, in which the students were asked questions they had been taught in class (e.g., What's your name? What's your T-number?, etc.) and the John Test, a standardized oral production test widely used in refugee programs in the United States. The John Test utilizes a series of pictures, about which the student is asked questions. For the purposes of the Ban Vinai testing, some of the questions were altered to eliminate cultural problems.

I gave the pre-test individually to all the students. Those who did fairly well on it were given the John Test as well. The students were told beforehand, in Hmong, that they were going to be given an oral interview, but other than that the test was conducted entirely in English.

On the pre-test, the student got a point if he or she understood the question, another point if an answer was forthcoming, and a third point if I could readily understand the answer. I did not distinguish between grammatical and ungrammatical responses. On the John Test, the student got one point for an understood question, and another point for an understandable answer, with no distinction again being made between a grammatical and an ungrammatical response. I gave only the first part of the John Test. Any score above zero on the production test indicates that the subject managed to at least understand something said to him in English.

4. The Hmong Reading Test. This test was identical to the simple reading test given in January, except that the passages were different. Vue Tcher and Tou Vue gave the test to students one at a time, with the test conducted entirely in Hmong. A score close to thirty indicates that the subject could read out loud fluently, with no hesitations. A score of ten or below indicates that the student could decode the written material, but with great difficulty.

5. The Hmong Writing Test. This test was in three parts: the first part required the student to
write his name in English and Hmong spelling; his T-number, and his address in camp. The second part consisted of dictation of letters and numbers in Hmong. The third part consisted of dictated sentences in Hmong. The test was given to all students, in groups, by Vue Tcher, with Hmong monitors checking student progress and answering questions. A raw score of 2 1/2 indicates that the subject was able to write his or her name in English spelling.

6. Testing Sites. The students were tested in the classrooms used by the Consortium. These classrooms were structures of bamboo and thatch (we were lucky it didn't rain during any of our testing), with wooden benches and tables for the students to sit at. All the classes had blackboards, which we used in teaching the visuals for the comprehension test. The students were packed rather tightly into the classrooms, but there was a minimum of sharing of answers: we had carefully explained that we did not want them to share answers, and they good-naturedly complied with our request, with occasional reminders from the monitors.

7. General Comments. All the tests had been planned, assembled, proof-read and briefly field-tested in the United States between January and April. At Ban Vinai prior to the week of testing, I gave the tests to Vue Tcher, Tou Vue and some of the Hmong aides, to double-check for appropriateness and consistency. It was on the basis of this testing that I altered some of the questions on the John Test.

Erica Hagen, Vue Tcher and I corrected the tests we gave, but we deliberately did not record the scores on the data sheets until all the testing had been completed; none of us knew which students were in which cell until everyone had been tested.

It was necessary, in planning the tests, to arrive at instruments which would register very small gains in English, but at the same time be difficult enough to differentiate among the performances of the more advanced students. In retrospect, the tests appear to have been ranged just right for the
population tested. On a "standard" ESL scale, however, the best of the subjects would be called a high beginning or low intermediate ESL student.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Membership in Groups

The 114 Hmong refugees who originally registered for classes in January were by no means the same group of refugees who completed the course, and therefore got tested, in April.

We tested everyone in the Consortium classes, for two reasons. We did not want to sort out subjects from non-subjects prior to the testing because that would have involved re-discovering who was in which group. More important, attendance or non-attendance in the Consortium's program was closely tied, by rumor and fact, into a refugee's chances of going to the U.S. in the first place, and his having to attend an additional three-month ESL/CO program in the refugee processing center in Chonburi in the second place. There is no way we could have convinced the refugees that our testing, or lack thereof, was not related to their chances of going to the U.S., so we were reluctant to exclude anyone from testing.

For the same reason, we were reluctant to find and interview subjects who had registered in January, but who had dropped out of the program between registration and the last week of classes. In recording the test scores on the data sheets, we discovered that fifty-two of the original registrants for the program had dropped out. The dropout rate was consistent across groups, so we feel that it was not related to the variables we were testing. Information on the numbers registering and finishing the program is summarized in the following table:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Registered</th>
<th>Finished Program</th>
<th>Percent Dropped</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. -Ed, -HLit</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>43.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. -Ed, +HLit</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. +Ed, -HLit</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. +Ed, +HLit</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>51.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dropout rate, then, cut the number of individuals in the original groups by about half. We lost a subject or two for other reasons: one little girl turned out to be, not the not-so-little girl who had registered, but her little sister, and so on.

Another factor that reduced the number of subjects in the groups was the number who showed by their performance on the Consortium's placement test that they knew some English before they entered the program. I eliminated all these from the groups because I was not equipped to measure improvement, the Consortium's placement test not being sufficiently detailed or controlled to be used as a before-and-after proficiency test.

The majority of subjects who had picked up some English prior to the program were almost all from the +Ed groups: eight in group D (+Ed, +HLit), six in group C (+Ed, -HLit), one in group A (-Ed, -HLLit), and none in group B (-Ed, +HLit).

These factors left the following numbers in each group:

A. -Ed, -HLit: 23  
B. -Ed, +HLit: 6  
C. +Ed, -HLit: 10  
D. +Ed, +HLit: 5

210
Statistical Analyses

I examined the effect of Hmong literacy and education on each of the English tests separately and on the overall English score (the average of the three tests) by means of a two-way analysis of variance. As the table below shows, Hmong literacy and education both significantly increase scores. As the table also shows, there is no consistently significant interaction between the two variables.

Effects of Hmong Literacy and Education on English Test Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Overall Mean</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Significance (df = 1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>44.38</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>F=112.70; PR&gt;F .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hm Lit</td>
<td>F= 28.44; PR&gt;F .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ed/Hm Lit</td>
<td>F=  6.80; PR&gt;F .0128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>30.75</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>F= 44.11; PR&gt;F .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hm Lit</td>
<td>F= 24.22; PR&gt;F .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ed/Hm Lit</td>
<td>F=   .07; PR&gt;F .7857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>23.79</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>F= 40.57; PR&gt;F .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hm Lit</td>
<td>F= 22.78; PR&gt;F .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ed/Hm Lit</td>
<td>F=   .23; PR&gt;F .6363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>32.93</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>F= 91.42; PR&gt;F .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hm Lit</td>
<td>F= 38.14; PR&gt;F .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ed/Hm Lit</td>
<td>F=   .45; PR&gt;F .5064</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I also conducted additional tests (one-way analyses of variance) to determine which of the groups differed significantly from which others. The scores of group A (−Ed, −HLit) differed significantly from the scores of all other groups on all tests (p. .01). The overall English scores of group D (+Ed, +Lit) differed significantly from the overall English scores of group C (+Ed, −HLit), as did their scores on the English Production test. In Appendix C, the outcomes of these statistical tests are given.
Interpretation of Outcomes

The most obvious of the findings of this study is that literacy in any of the languages produced a major effect on the subject's performance on the ESL tests. The ability to read helped the subjects in their efforts to learn another language. While this will come as no surprise to any ESL teacher who has dealt with non-literate, it is usually thought that lack of experience in a classroom environment is as big a handicap as lack of literacy skills. The findings of this study suggest that it is not.

An analysis of the actual performance of the non-literate subjects shows that they learned very little, if anything at all, from the program. A look at the test papers in Appendix B is illustrative: Wang Pao has the second highest average in group A, but his test papers show that he managed only to tell me his name and T-number in face-to-face questioning; to understand ten simple sentences; and to read five simple English sentences, four of which he could have remembered from previous discussion in Hmong. His performance on the English production test is the most thought-provoking, as it was this test that comes closest to situations for which the program prepares students, and as the questions had been overtly taught in class.

A second finding of this study is that the subjects who could read Hmong but who had never been to school did not score significantly lower on the tests than did those who had had formal education. Literacy in Hmong provided subjects with as much of a "leg up" in their efforts to learn English as formal classroom experience did. It is impossible to tell whether the advantage that Hmong literacy provides is in native-language literacy, or in literacy in a Roman alphabet similar to the English alphabet. A parallel study done with subjects whose native language is written in a non-Roman alphabet (e.g. Khmer or Lao) would shed light on this question. If it turned out that native language literacy was the crucial factor, and not the alphabet, the hypothesis
forwarded in some of the literature on literacy that native language literacy focuses overt attention on language structure, would be fairly strongly supported by this study. On the other hand, ESL teaching experience provides massive support for the hypothesis that familiarity with a Roman alphabet is of value to students attempting to learn English; it clearly gives them one less thing to learn.

The third finding of this study is that among the subjects with formal education, those who could read Hmong scored significantly better overall than those who could not. Assuming that the significance is real, and not an artifact of the small number of subjects, native language literacy is of significant help to Hmong learning English whether or not they have formal educational backgrounds. Again, it is impossible to tell whether the advantage the Hmong literates possess is in native language literacy or in familiarity with a Roman alphabet.

This study was of course done in the context of the Consortium ESL/CO program, which in its ESL aspects did not differ to any great extent from most other classroom ESL programs. I am assuming that in eliminating individuals who had learned some English prior to the Consortium program from the subject lists, I de facto eliminated individuals who were motivated to, and able to, pick up English from self-study, contact with English-speakers in camp and in Laos, or study with other Hmong. (In fact, some of the best non-native English spoken in camp -- notably that of Vue Tcher and many of the Hmong aides who helped give the tests -- had been learned informally.) The findings of this study, then, apply only to the effects of literacy and education on attempts to learn English in a formal classroom environment.

PROGRAMMATIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

As I mentioned before, the Consortium ESL/CO program around which this study was done is one of the programs funded by the UNHCR to provide English
and orientation to Indochinese refugees who have been admitted to the United States. The curricula of these programs is standard, and very much oriented towards meeting the practical linguistic and cultural needs of the refugees as they deal with life in the United States. Although non-literate students turn up in these programs in sizable numbers, native language literacy is not part of the curricula, as it is thought to be not as valuable to the student as ESL, especially in so short-term a context.

While this study strongly supports a programmatic approach in which Hmong students are taught literacy in Hmong as a preliminary to ESL, it provides no information per se as to whether non-literate Hmong will learn more English in a short-term program, a portion of which is devoted to Hmong literacy, as opposed to a program of the same duration which teaches only ESL.

If the fact that the non-literate subjects in the study learned little or nothing in the Consortium program is taken into account, however, the study suggests that any alternative program design can produce at least equal or better results with non-literate students; it then supports a program in which Hmong literacy training substitutes for some of the ESL.

Consideration of the performance of the non-literates in this study also suggests that it might be useful to test non-literates in all the United Nations-funded programs, both for achievement and for English proficiency as determined by non-program oriented tests. If all non-literates learn as little from the three-month ESL programs as did the ones in the Consortium program, the overall program design is suspect. If the non-literates perform differently from program to program, however, this would indicate that the programs differ in their ability to reach the non-literate student.

The implications of this study as to the value of native-language literacy can be extended to ethnic groups other than the Hmong, as long as the native
languages of these groups are written in Roman alphabets, and as long as the Roman alphabets are recognized by the groups as viable alphabets for their languages. It would for example be hard to tell whether non-literate Mien refugees would benefit from Mien literacy training (in the Roman alphabet designed for Mien by missionaries) prior to English language training, unless it was determined beforehand that that alphabet was generally accepted by the Mien as "their" alphabet.

It is hardly necessary to point out that this study, despite the very strong statistical validity of the results, is at best a pilot because of the small number of students used in the statistical analysis.

NOTE

1. I am indebted to a Center for Applied Linguistics colleague, Dr. Sylvia Scribner, and to Dr. Steve Reder of the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory for their help in the statistical analyses.

Barbara Robson
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Washington, D.C. 20007
Appendix A: Sample Data Sheet

(name) Npe: WA NRG PAO (in English) Sau ua Askiv
(age) Xeem: NAVA (Sau ua hmoob)

Chaw nyob hauv chaw so Vib Nais
(addresses on Ban Viven)

(Np. niam) 20

Koj muaj poj niam/txiv lawm los tsis tau? Muaj lawm

Koj tus poj niam/txiv lub npe hu licas? 1

Koj puas tau kawn ntauv los dua? Tau

Koj tuaj so hauv chaw so Taib tæb tau hov ntev lawm?

Kev nycem htauw:

(Can you read hmong)

Koj nyeem htauw hmoob puas tau? Tau

Test scores: (Txhob sau dabtsi rau hauv no)

ENG: 40 + 30 42%  Comp  5 + 20 13%  Reading

  10 9%  Prod          Writing

HM: 0 0 0  Reading

  2 1/2 7%  Writing
ANN & BEN LISTENING TEST
FORM B

- Appendix B: Sample Test Papers

Jame Wong Pao
T. No.
Address
1. This is Ann. She's a student.

2. This is Ben. He's a student.

3. She's a teacher.
1. She's a teacher.

2. This is Ben. He's a student.
Oral Production Pre-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What's your name?</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do you spell it?</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What's your T-number?</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What's your address on camp?</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Are you married?</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What's your husband's name?</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How do you spell it?</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Do you have children?</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. How many children do you have?</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total score: 6

0: didn't understand question
1: understood, no verbal answer
2: understood, verbal answer
3: understood, correct verbal answer
Npe **WANGPAO** (Sau ua Askiv)

__________________________ (Sau ua Hmoob)

T-number

Chaw nyob hauv chaw so Vib Nais

Sau cov niam ntawv thiab cov leb:

— — — — — — — — — —

Sau raws li tüs xib fwb hais:

__________________
__________________
__________________
__________________

Scores: Recognition ____ Dictation ____

[Score on Hmong reading test]
APPENDIX C: STATISTICS

ONE-WAY ANALYSES OF VARIANCE.

Group A (−Ed, −HLit)/Group B (−Ed, +HLit)

\[ df_1 = 1; \quad df_2 = 27; \quad F_{.01,1,27} = 7.68 \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significant?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Comprehension</td>
<td>A: 37.61</td>
<td>32.37</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B: 93.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Reading</td>
<td>A: 15.22</td>
<td>19.09</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B: 85.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Production</td>
<td>A: 10.22</td>
<td>10.85</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B: 19.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall English</td>
<td>A: 14.97</td>
<td>30.44</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B: 42.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group A (−Ed, −HLit)/Group C (+Ed, −HLit)

\[ df_1 = 1; \quad df_2 = 31; \quad F_{.01,1,31} = 7.53 \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significant?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Comprehension</td>
<td>A: 37.61</td>
<td>130.14</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C: 114.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Reading</td>
<td>A: 15.22</td>
<td>27.94</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C: 93.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Production</td>
<td>A: 10.22</td>
<td>29.97</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C: 20.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall English</td>
<td>A: 14.97</td>
<td>81.10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C: 49.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Group A (-Ed, -HLit)/Group D (+Ed, +HLit)

\[ df_1 = 1; df_2 = 26; \quad F_{.01,1,26} = 7.72 \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significant?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Comprehension</td>
<td>A: 37.61</td>
<td>119.20</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D: 131.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Reading</td>
<td>A: 15.22</td>
<td>289.75</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D: 171.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Production</td>
<td>A: 10.22</td>
<td>78.53</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D: 32.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall English</td>
<td>A: 14.97</td>
<td>290.83</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D: 71.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group B (-Ed, +HLit)/Group C (+Ed, -HLit)

\[ df_1 = 1; df_2 = 14; \quad F_{.01,1,14} = 8.86 \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significant?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Comprehension</td>
<td>B: 93.30</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C: 114.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Reading</td>
<td>B: 85.00</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C: 93.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Production</td>
<td>B: 19.67</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C: 20.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall English</td>
<td>B: 42.83</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C: 49.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Group B (-Ed, +HLit)/Group D (+Ed, +HLit)

\[ df_1 = 1; \, df_2 = 9; \quad F_{.01,1,9} = 10.56 \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significant?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Comprehension</td>
<td>B: 93.30</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D: 131.00</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Reading</td>
<td>B: 85.00</td>
<td>7.21</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D: 171.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Production</td>
<td>B: 19.67</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D: 32.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall English</td>
<td>B: 42.83</td>
<td>8.19</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D: 71.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group C (+Ed, -HLit)/Group D (+Ed, +HLit)

\[ df_1 = 1; \, df_2 = 13; \quad F_{.01,1,13} = 9.07 \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significant?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Comprehension</td>
<td>C: 114.50</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D: 131.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Reading</td>
<td>C: 93.00</td>
<td>6.73</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D: 171.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Production</td>
<td>C: 20.90</td>
<td>13.14</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D: 32.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall English</td>
<td>C: 49.10</td>
<td>9.48</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>D: 71.33</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
AN ERROR ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH
COMPOSITIONS WRITTEN BY HMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

Sharon Dwyer

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, error analyses have attempted to answer two questions: (1) what are the errors that language learners of a certain native language background make in using the second language that they are trying to learn, and (2) what may cause these errors? It was assumed that interference from the native language was the only cause until, through error analyses, it was found that language learners made errors which could not reasonably be traced to interference, and which, therefore, had to be coming from some other source. While answers to the first question above can be arrived at fairly satisfactorily, answers about the causes of the errors are more difficult to give, as there are too many variables that cannot be controlled. In this study I will identify the types of errors made by Hmong college students in written English, and examine those errors which seem to be due to interference from their native language, based on similarities between the nature of the error made in English and a corresponding structure in Hmong. In essence I will be examining correlations rather than making any strong claims about cause since, as will become apparent later on, there are indeed variables which might be important but could not be controlled.

METHOD

Twenty-nine compositions written in English by Hmong students at the University of Minnesota were used in this study. Of these students twenty-six were male and three were female. The males were between the ages of 19 and 29 and the females between the ages of 20 and 31. All compositions were written under similar testing conditions: students were
given thirty minutes to write a composition in English on one of four given topics without the aid of a dictionary, grammar or notes. The composition writing is the first part of a series of tests administered at the University of Minnesota to all incoming students whose native language is not English, for the purpose of determining their proficiency in English. On the basis of the results, students may be admitted without further English study to the program they have chosen at the university, or, if the scores are not high enough, they will be required to take more English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

Although compositions were written on many different topics, I restricted my choice of compositions to be used in the study to those written on topics which would require students to use more than just the present tense to adequately answer the question. Consequently, compositions used in the study were written on only the following twelve topics:

1. Have you ever flown in an airplane? Describe your trip and how you felt. (3 compositions)

2. Tell the story of the historical origin of your country. (2 compositions)

3. Describe your trip to the U.S. or some other trip that you have taken within the last two weeks. (6 compositions)

4. Discuss what you did on your Christmas vacation. (1 composition)

5. Discuss your first reactions to American food. Describe the differences between American meals and the meals in your country. (5 compositions)

6. Discuss a teacher in your life who inspired you or whom you respected a great deal. (1 composition)

7. What is the most difficult course you remember taking in your school life? (1 composition)
8. Tell what you were doing before you came to the U.S. for your education. (5 compositions)

9. What was your favorite high school subject? (3 compositions)

10. What ideas or articles would you like to take back to your country from what you have learned here in the U.S.? (1 composition)

11. If a friend came to visit you in your country what would you want to show him or her? What would you take him/her to see? (1 composition)

12. Tell what you would do if a hijacker tried to capture the plane that you were riding on. (1 composition)

I hoped that by using a number of different topics I would find a great variety of sentence patterns and vocabulary items being used. This variety is important since one of the weaknesses of error analysis is that it can only detect errors in structures that learners actually use; but it has been suggested (Schachter 1977) that learners avoid the structures in the second language that they find most difficult, either because they do not yet even know that these structures exist or because they feel too unsure of how to use them. By including a number of different topics which would elicit varying sentence patterns, I hoped to reduce the possibility of certain structures not being present in my corpus because they had been avoided.

Although it is easy to spot grammatical and lexical errors in a composition written by a non-native speaker, it is sometimes difficult to determine exactly what the nature of the error is, since to some extent one has to guess what it was the writer really wanted to say. I used my intuition to make decisions about what the writer intended to say and thence what type of error s/he had made. Since each error was in the context of a unified composition, these intuitive judgements are not as unscientific as they sound.
However, there were still instances where it was too difficult to categorize the error, as in sentence 1 below, or where it was not possible to make enough sense out of the sentence to decide what the error was, as in sentence 2 below.

1. The teacher who I respected that he or she educate in the class well and used the new method to teach the students and make the students understand him or her well.

2. Also my arrival to Wisconsin in potage of Wisconsin.

In sentence 1 the student should have been writing about a specific teacher in his past whom he respected (topic 6), but, either because he misunderstood the question or because he had more to say on a broader topic, what he really wrote about was teachers in general. In this first sentence of his composition, he has pushed two thoughts together: 'I respected that he or she educated well; and, I respect teachers who educate well.' Although the student's sentence can be repaired by leaving out the words "that he or she," it is not easy to label the student's actual error. Structurally, he has made a correct relative clause and a correct complement clause, but they don't fit together in the way he has written them. In cases like this and like sentence 2, where the meaning of the sentence is too unclear, I did not classify the error and did not include the sentence in the total count of sentences.

It is also necessary to distinguish between an error—something which occurs systematically in the learner's interlanguage—and a mistake—something which is a performance slip, like a slip of the tongue in the spoken language (Corder 1973). Given a chance, the learner would recognize a mistake as wrong, but not an error, since the error would belong to his/her conception of how the language s/he is learning really works. Since there was no established way to determine whether a student had slipped and made a mistake, or whether s/he had made an error, I decided to count
only those erroneous structures which occurred in the data at least twice. Additionally, I did not consider spelling problems, misuses of lexical items, which usually occurred only once anyway, and punctuation problems. I must add that a study of the reasoning behind the punctuation used would yield very interesting results, as some of the compositions did not contain a single period or capital letter while others were riddled with them. A set of words was counted a sentence in this study if it would have been written as a sentence by a native English speaker.

RESULTS

Before looking at the types of errors found in the compositions, let me first characterize the compositions in terms of what the students demonstrated, in a positive way, about their abilities to write in English. In the following two tables, compositions are listed according to proficiency groupings.

Table 1. DESCRIPTION OF COMPOSITIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficiency Group</th>
<th># of Compositions</th>
<th>Av. # of Sentences Per Composition</th>
<th>Av. # of Errors Per Sentence</th>
<th>Av. # of Words Per Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50 - 59</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 - 69</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 - 79</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 - 89</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows the number of compositions used from each proficiency range, the average number of sentences per composition, the average number of errors per sentence, and the average number of words per sentence. Table 2 shows the number of different sentence types used at each level and the percentage of that type of sentence to all sentences used by that proficiency level.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>50-59</th>
<th>60-69</th>
<th>70-79</th>
<th>80-89</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple Sentences (SVO, SVC, SV)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compound Sentences</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Complex Sentences</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'that' Complement Sentences</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleft Sentences</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrasal Adverbial</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If...then Relative Clauses</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerund Phrase Embedded Questions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Quotes Unclassified Sentences</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The proficiency scores listed in the tables are the results of an evaluation external to this study. In this evaluation, all compositions were read and scored by two independent readers, both members of the ESL teaching staff at the University of Minnesota, using the Jacobs composition grading scale. The Jacobs scale operates on the reader's impressions of five different aspects of composition writing: communicability and organization, content, vocabulary use, language use (grammar), and mechanics (spelling and punctuation). Each aspect receives a numerical part score. These are added together to attain a total score ranging between 34 and 100. With a score of 80, a student is judged sufficiently proficient in English composition writing to enter a freshman composition writing course. The compositions used in this study, then, ranged from freshman composition level students down to students who would be required to take intensive English classes at a low intermediate level.
The results in the tables seem to indicate that the average number of errors per sentence, the length, and the complexity of the sentences may all be factors which contribute to the readers' subjective impressions of the language use and mechanics of the composition—all correlate positively with the proficiency rating. While this may seem intuitively obvious, there has been a great deal of discussion about the validity of an impressionistic scale.

Let us now turn to the errors students made in their compositions. Table 3 shows the structures in which there were errors in the 29 compositions. The first column shows the number of incorrect uses, the second column shows the number of correct uses, and the third column shows what percentage the errors represent over all the correct and incorrect uses totalled.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Number of Errors</th>
<th>Number of Correct Uses</th>
<th>% Error Error + Correct Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>articles</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be verb + ing</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be - omission</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complement clause</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conditional</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gerund</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modal + verb</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noun subject</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>passive</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>past tense-simple</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plural nouns</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prepositions</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present tense-simple</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present perfect</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pronoun use-total</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>object pronoun</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subject pronoun</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relative clause</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>there is; there are</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to + verb</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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It is important to consider the number of errors, the number of correct uses, and the percentage of errors over the total number of errors plus the number of correct uses, for several reasons. First, the number of errors, considered alone, might lead one to think an error is greater than it actually is in relation to the number of times the structure was used correctly. There are, for example, a high number of counted errors in the use of articles. But articles occur frequently in English, so there is likely to be a large number of places where they should have been used. Additionally, the number of correct uses in the compositions is more than four times that of the incorrect uses. The percentage shows, then, that students are doing well with their use of articles relative to their use of some of the other structures. In contrast, there were only a few errors in the use of there is/are, but there were also few correct uses, making the percentage of error much higher than that of articles, thereby suggesting that students have more trouble using there is/are correctly than they have using articles. Here, however, the percentage alone would also have been misleading. It is important to know how few samples that percentage is built on.

From the results listed in Table 3 it would seem that the most important errors based on frequency are: the use of be + verb + ing, gerunds, passives, the present tense, the present perfect, and there is/are. All of these structures have 50 percent or more error. Least significant are errors in the use of prepositions, subject pronouns, and to + verb; each of which has 10 percent or less error. However, none of the percents seem to indicate that the students were able to consistently use the structures listed correctly.

If we examine the structures with the highest percentages of error, we note that these structures are the least frequently used. The interpretation of this infrequency relates to how important that error should be considered. Some structures simply do not occur as frequently as others, and it could be that
the topics these compositions were written on did not lend themselves to the use of certain structures. This would mean that the compositions do not represent a balanced sample of the students' writing, and the percentages should be taken with a grain of salt. On the other hand, as has been mentioned above, students may be avoiding difficult structures. There is/are, for example, occurs fairly frequently in written English and could have been used in any of the twelve topics. It could be that the low number of uses and the high percentage of error in those few uses taken together indicate that the structure is uncomfortable for Hmong ESL learners. At this point it is impossible to say which interpretation is correct or whether both are partially correct.

Table 4 shows the errors found in the compositions in a slightly different light by indicating, in some cases, the direction in which the error was made, the number of occurrences of that type of error, the percent that error represents of all the errors made, and whether or not the error is common to other ESL learners. In Table 3 all of the errors concerning the past tense, for example, are added together and do not show in what way the verb tense was incorrectly used. Table 4 shows which other tenses or aspects were used where the past tense should have appeared. The first part of Table 4 shows errors in the verb phrase, including auxiliary verbs and adverbs. The second part deals with the noun phrase, and the third part with miscellaneous errors. In some cases the number of errors that appear in Table 3 is the same as the number of errors in Table 4, but in the cases where the direction of an error has been indicated in Table 4, the numbers do not correspond for the reasons given above.

The marks in the third column of Table 4 indicate the types of errors that Hmong ESL learners share with ESL learners from other native language backgrounds based on the results of a study done by Richards and Sampson (1974). The authors collected and collated the results of error analyses on the use of English by ESL learners from the following
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Errors in Verb Phrases</th>
<th>Number of Errors</th>
<th>Percent of Total Errors</th>
<th>Error is Common to Other ESL Students (Richards &amp; Sampson 1974)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>adjective used as adverb</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confusion - got/have/have got</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be + verb</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have + to + verb + en</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do/did + verb + ed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>looks like used for is or seems</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modal + verb + ed</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>omission of final -s on 3rd p. sing. verb</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>omission of be</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to + verb + ed</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conditional replaced by past</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gerund replaced by base form of verb</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>infinitive replaced by past</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>passive replaced by past</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>past replaced by present</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present perfect</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>future</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>passive</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present continuous</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>past perfect</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>past perfect replaced by past</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present replaced by past</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>passive</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verb + ing (be omitted)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Errors in Noun Phrases</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>article omitted</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>article added where unnecessary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wrong article used</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confusion of other/another/others</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confusion of a lot/lots</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confusion of question words</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noun subject duplicated with a pronoun</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>omission of there is/are/it is</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>omission of final -s on plural nouns</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subject pronoun we/I omitted</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unnecessary agreement between Adj. and N.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>word form incorrect</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Errors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confusion of since/ago/for</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of inversion in questions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of subject/verb agreement</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>location pronoun omitted</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>object pronoun omitted (inanimate)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preposition wrong</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preposition omitted</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>presence of plural -s where unnecessary</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unnecessary duplication of object</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>word order wrong</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
native language backgrounds: Japanese, Chinese, Burmese, French, Czech, Polish, Tagalog, Maori, Maltese and several Indian and African languages. From the results of the studies they assembled a list of the errors found to be common to learners of all these backgrounds. For example, learners from all of the above native language backgrounds made the error of using the present tense for the past. The absence of an X, however, does not mean that there is no other ESL learner that makes that type of error. Duškova (1969) found that Czech English language learners omitted forms of the verb be. But be is not marked in the column, although Richards and Sampson used Duškova's study, because learners from some of the other language backgrounds did not make that error. Hmong learners share many of the most frequent errors with learners of many other native language backgrounds. I will return to discuss the significance of this fact later.

DISCUSSION

In this part of the study I would like to examine some of the errors listed in Tables 3 and 4 for resemblances to corresponding structures in Hmong, suggesting that the errors might have been caused by transfer from Hmong. The structures to be discussed were chosen because the errors bore a marked resemblance to corresponding structures in Hmong, not because they were the most important errors as indicated by the percentages in Table 3, although most of the errors to be discussed in this light had relatively high percentages.

There are a number of errors in the tables which could be loosely grouped together as the absence of necessary inflection in English. This general type of error corresponds to Hmong morphology which is comparatively less complex than that of English. Let us first examine the errors of this type.

The system of English verb tenses, aspects, moods, and voices is complex and generally problematic to ESL students, as can be seen by the number of

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errors shared by ESL learners of many backgrounds, shown in Table 4. In most cases the verb system in a learner's native language does not reflect the same semantic contrasts as English and, except in closely related languages, the syntactic devices used to make these distinctions do not resemble those used in English. Not surprisingly, then, Hmong also differs from English with respect to the verb system—neither the form of the verbs nor the meanings produced by each form are the same. The systems come the closest to each other in the base form of the verb (in English, the present, except third person singular and 'be').

   In Hmong additional words are added to a sentence to change the tense or aspect of the verb—the base verb itself does not change its form. The following Hmong sentences illustrate a few tense and aspect changes:

   3. kuv mus
       I go
       'I go/am going'

   4. kuv mus lawm
       I go past-finished action
       'I went (it is finished)'

   5. kuv yeej mus
       I usually go
       'I usually go'

   6. kuv yuav mus
       I future go
       'I will go'

   In each of the above sentences mus meaning 'go' remains the same while the added words change the time reference or the quality. If the time reference is clear from the context or from time adverbials used in the sentence, such as hnag hmo 'yesterday' or tag kis 'tomorrow', time markers such as lawm or yuav are optional.

   7. kuv yuav mus tag kis
tag kis kuv mus
      'I'll go tomorrow'

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In English, however, tense, aspect and mood are strictly regulated and obligatory. Verbs are marked by morphemes added onto the base verb, such as -ed for the simple past; by internal changes to the base verb, as in irregular simple past forms; by words added to the sentence, such as will to indicate the future; and by combinations of morphemes and added words, as in the present perfect.

Since Hmong does not change the form of the base verb in the sentence, it would not be surprising if Hmong ESL learners erred in favor of overusing the base form of the verb in English; and, this is what seems to be happening when the present is used for the past or for any other tense or aspect, when the base form is used in place of the gerund, and when the final -s is left off of third person present singular verbs. This error accounts for the high percentages of error in the use of the present, the past and gerunds in Table 3. The following student sentences will serve as examples.

8. (Topic 3) After breakfast I bring lunch and I am carrying my bag then I go in the bus.
9. (Topic 12) But, this way it is 50 percent you will get kill very easy if lost control to them.
10. (Topic 3) The first I am with my family come from Thailand to the Denver.
11. (Topic 7) I have to take many time to read and keep remember.
12. (Topic 3) I trip from Bonvinai to Bangkok is 12 hours go by bus and car.

In many of the compositions the student began by using the past tense but in the course of writing dropped it and continued in the present. With respect to the overuse of the present tense, the X's in Table 4 indicate that learners from all of the native languages that Richards included in his study made this error. Given that languages like French, Czech or Polish use morphemes to mark tense and aspect and have verb systems that semantically are a little more similar to English than Hmong is, the question of whether the error is caused by transfer is still unclear. Some
other process, such as simplification of anything that is too complex in the target language, may be a factor.

Missing affixes also account for the errors in the use of the plural for nouns. Like verbs in Hmong, nouns do not change forms to indicate case or number. Plurality is marked by adding numerals or words meaning 'some,' 'many,' etc. before the noun. Singularity, plurality or duality may also be marked by adding the appropriate pronoun after a noun and changing the classifier to the collective plural cov. For example:

13. Kuv muaj ob tug muam. 'I have two sisters.'
   I have two clsf. sister

14. Cov muam lawv mus tsev. 'The sisters are go-
   clsf. sister they go home ing home.'

15. Tus muam nws mus tsev. 'The sister is going
   clsf. sister she go home home.'

In English, however, plurality must be marked by a morpheme -s added to the end of the noun, except in the cases of a few irregular plurals, such as oxen. In standard American English a pronoun duplicating a noun is not acceptable:

16. My sisters they went home.

Based on Hmong grammatical rules, the Hmong learner might be expected to favor the uninflected form of the noun in English as well. The difference between Hmong and English word structure may pose an additional problem for the acquisition of affixes (-ed as well as -s): Hmong words always end in vowels, open sounds that are easy to hear; while in English grammatical markers such as plurality come at the ends of words. These markers are consonants or consonant clusters that are unaccented and difficult to hear in rapid speech, especially if you are not used to listening to the ends of words.

On this basis, however, one would expect the third person singular present tense to show a similar
dropping of the -s. The compositions had very few errors of this type. This might be explained in that most of the compositions were concerned with the writer's activities, so third person subjects did not occur very frequently.

There is/are has already been mentioned in terms of the high percentage of error and the low frequency of use. Here again, Hmong differs from English. There is a structure muaj 'have' which corresponds roughly to English there is/are when it is not preceded by a subject.

17. Kuv muaj ob lub rooj. 'I have two tables.' I have two clsf. table
18. Muaj ob lub rooj. 'There are two tables.' have two clsf. table

If there were literal interference from Hmong, we would expect have to appear in the students compositions where there is/are should appear. In fact, errors did sometimes involve use of have, as in the following three student sentences:

19. He said that it has many subjects for you to choose.
20. We're lived with 'Chines' in 'China' but haved problem between the both people.
21. In our country had no big building, no big town, no big market.

The omission of forms of be and the use of pronouns seem to be under better control by the Hmong learners, according to the percentages in Table 3; however, with respect to transfer from Hmong the types of errors the students made are nonetheless interesting. Let us look first at the omission of the verb be.

There is no one verb in Hmong which serves all the same purposes as be in English, even when it is being used as the main verb in the sentence. There is a verb yug which means 'be' in sentences containing
a noun complement, as for example:

22. Koj yog Hmoob. you be Hmong 'You are Hmong.'

There are two words which are used verbally to mean 'be + locative:' nyob and nrog. Nyob could be translated into English as is located or situated (at/on/ in) in sentences like the following:

23. Muaj ib lub pob nyob saum rooj. 'There is a ball have one clsf. ball is on table on the table.'

Nyob is also used in the formulaic greetings 'How are you?' 'I'm fine.'

24. Koj nyob li cas? you be how 'How are you?'

Kuv nyob zoo. I be fine/good 'I'm fine.'

Nrog means 'be with' ('accompany') or 'with' as in sentences like:

25. Kuv nrog nws mus tsev. 'I go home with him.'

I am with he go home

In sentences containing what in English would be a predicate adjective, Hmong uses no verb; the English sentence: The ball is red and the phrase the red ball would both appear in Hmong as:

26. Lub pob liab clsf. ball red 'The ball is red'/'the red ball'

In Hmong it is possible to have a sentence like the following:

27. Lub pob liab nyob saum rooj. 'The red ball clsf. ball red is on table is on the table.'

If there is any interference from Hmong, a Hmong ESL learner might choose to write the following incorrect English sentence: 'The ball is red is on the
table.' or 'The ball red is on the table.' or a sentence like a literal translation of sentence 25: 'I am with him go home.'

The following student error could come from this type of interference from Hmong:

28. I am with my family come from Thailand (cf. sentence 25).

It is difficult to say with certainty, however, that this type of interference is, in fact, the source of the error. The easiest repair from a native speaker's perspective would be to add the words when I before the second verb. The absence of the words when I does not necessarily have anything to do with the type of interference from Hmong suggested above—the learner may simply not be familiar with this type of English sentence structure. In any case, the obvious repair of an error from a native speaker's perspective may not shed any light on what is really going on in the learner's interlanguage to cause the error. The learner's interlanguage may, or may not, resemble a native speaker's language system on this point.

If Hmong is straightforwardly interfering with the students' use of be in English, we would expect a greater percentage of errors in be + adjective types of uses. I therefore re-counted correct and incorrect uses of be, dividing structures into those that had to do with location (Hmong: nyob and nrog) those containing noun complements (Hmong: yog), and those containing adjectives (Hmong: φ). The results are shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Incorrect Use</th>
<th>Correct Use</th>
<th>Percent Incorrect Incorrect + Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>be + locative</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be + noun</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be + adjective</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Errors are, in fact, higher in the use of be + adjective, suggesting that Hmong may indeed be interfering with the students' use of English.

Finally, I would like to briefly examine two types of errors the Hmong students made in the use of English pronouns, which also seem to have their sources in interference from Hmong: duplication of a noun subject with a pronoun, omission of the subject pronoun, and omission of an inanimate object pronoun. Note the following student errors:

29. Difference only one thing that my people we eat rice but American people they don't eat rice.
30. Last two months my father and me we went by bus to Chicago visited my grandmother.
31. While in the refugee camp stayed in the camp only.
32. I was very happy that was above the cloud.
33. If they want money and you have the money maybe you should give to them.
34. If not possible, please don't do and...

In sentences 29 and 30 the subject noun has been duplicated by a pronoun. I have already mentioned above that one way of indicating the plurality of a noun in Hmong is by using a pronoun after it. We have seen that noun + pronoun is an acceptable pattern in Hmong. In English on the other hand, although we have all probably heard sentences like My brother he took the bus to town alone yesterday, this is not considered standard American English usage. It should be noted, however, that the students may not know what is standard English and what is not. If they hear sentences like the above, it may serve to reinforce the transfer error. Alternatively, hearing such sentences used may be the cause of the error.

In sentences 31-34 either the subject pronoun I or we has been left out, or the object pronoun. In Hmong, where it is already clear who is being referred to, it is not necessary to include the subject as long as the subject is either we or I. In English it is also permissible to exclude a subject pronoun in some conjoined sentences such as:
35. I went downtown and bought a jacket.

In informal, contextualized speech English also permits subject deletions such as in the following two sentences.

37. See you later.

Both Hmong and English, then, allow for the omission of the subject pronoun under certain conditions, but the rules for deciding when it is sufficiently clear who is being referred to are contextual in Hmong (and in informal English) and grammatical in English as in conjoined sentences. Since omission of the subject pronoun is rarely treated in English classrooms, the source of the Hmong students' omission of the subject in English probably lies in transfer from Hmong.

With regard to the omission of the object pronoun, Hmong and English clearly differ. In English an object is required after certain transitive verbs. If it has been mentioned before, the object may appear as the pronoun it. In Hmong, the third person pronoun nws cannot refer to inanimate objects. The object must be mentioned by name, or, if its reference is clear, it may be left off in object position. Sentences 33 and 34 seem to show a transfer of this system into English. In sentence 33 money is repeated once where a native speaker of English would probably have used a pronoun, then deleted after give where a native English speaker would certainly have used it.

In the last few pages I have discussed only errors for which transfer from Hmong to English seems to be a reasonable explanation. But in the introduction it was noted that error analyses have shown that some errors cannot be explained by transfer. There are a number of such errors in this study, too, and before closing I would like to briefly mention a few of them. They include unnecessary agreement between adjective and noun; confusions in lexical items: 'how' for 'what,' 'what' for 'where,'
'got' for 'have,' etc.; using the wrong article or using too many articles; and replacing the past tense with the present perfect, future, passive, present continuous, or past perfect. Some of these errors might be attributable to transfer from other languages that the students know. All of the Hmong students currently at the University know Laotian, most probably know some Thai, and some may have received their previous education in French. Agreement between the adjective and noun likely comes from French; there is nothing in Hmong to trigger that type of error. Other errors may be the result of transfer from Laotian or Thai, but the possibility of transfer from a second or third language into still another fourth language must remain a question for other studies to address.

Still other errors may simply be due to the student's as yet incomplete understanding of a complex system in English. The random errors in the verb forms and the overuse or misuse of articles may be examples of this type of error. Some errors may be attributable to the way the language has been presented in the English classes the student has attended. It is likely that all of these factors influence the types of errors that occur at various stages of a learner's development in the second language.

SUMMARY

In this study I have counted and classified errors made by Hmong ESL learners in writing English, shown which of these errors are shared with learners from other language backgrounds, and attempted to show which of these errors can be traced to interference from Hmong, based on correlations between the errors made in English and corresponding structures in Hmong. In order to address two issues central to second language acquisition—the order of acquisition of structures in the target language (or the order in which certain errors appear and disappear in learners' interlanguages) and the sources of the errors which cannot be traced to transfer—there are two ways in which I hope to expand this study. First, as I have mentioned above, the errors found in the compositions
can be classified according to the proficiency levels of the students as determined by their ratings on the Jacob's scale. The types of errors made can be correlated with the types of sentences attempted for each proficiency level, looking for errors which are persistent or errors which only show up at later stages in the language learner's development.

Secondly, individuals may have different cognitive strategies for learning a foreign language. These individual differences have been masked in this study by averages. Each error isolated here could be re-examined in selected individuals' compositions to study the degrees of variations between individuals. Such a re-analysis might show that transfer from the native language shared by all the individuals is not the cause. Along this line, the set of errors which cannot be attributed to transfer from Hmong needs to be examined for possible transfer from second and third languages spoken by the students before they began to learn English. Future studies could concentrate on the differences or similarities between errors learners make in speaking and in writing the second language.

NOTES

*I am indebted to the invaluable assistance of Vang Vang, who provided much information about Hmong grammatical structures. I would also like to thank Kate Winkler for her comments. This study was supported by a grant in aid of research from the Graduate School of the University of Minnesota to Dr. Bruce Downing.

1. The term 'past' here and throughout the paper means active past and 'passive' means any be + past participle construction regardless of tense.


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VIETNAMESE LEARNING SWEDISH AND HMONG
LEARNING FRENCH: A COMPARISON OF LAN-
GUAGE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS FOR REFUGEES

Bruce T. Downing

One point that all who are involved in refugee resettlement—social workers, health care providers, trainers, employers, and the refugees themselves—seem to be agreed upon is the idea that the new refugees must be helped to learn the dominant language of their new country as rapidly as possible, as a first step toward self-sufficiency in their new environment. At the same time, many people are concerned about the preservation of the refugees' own language to serve both as a means through which their cultural tradition can be passed on and as a vehicle for the acquisition of literacy and other skills and knowledge. Thus the language policies and programs of host countries are key factors in refugee resettlement.

Professional teachers of English as a second language (ESL) in this country have been forced to rethink many of their assumptions, methods, and goals since the time in early 1975 when they began to find many adults with little previous acquaintance with either written language or formal education in their classrooms. They have by now learned much from experience, and from each other, about appropriate ways of teaching refugees. But I think professionals in ESL realize that we all still have much to learn, especially about how to teach people from a very different culture and people with relatively little formal education, such as many of the Hmong refugees.

One possible source of new ideas might be the experience of other countries with large immigrant and refugee populations. It was with this idea in mind that I decided to investigate language programs for refugees in several countries of Western Europe.
I have chosen to report here on the two countries I visited that have the most elaborate and, as it turned out, the least similar, refugee resettlement programs: Sweden, which has admitted relatively small numbers of Asians along with political refugees from various other parts of the world, and France, which has provided asylum for a great many citizens of its former colonies in Indochina, including a considerable number of Hmong from Laos.

This report is based on published articles, government documents, research reports, and interviews with government officials, administrators, researchers, teachers and teacher trainers, as well as a few classroom visits, carried out during the months of August and September, 1981.* My report is concerned less directly with the Hmong people and Hmong resettlement than the other papers in this volume--there are no Hmong refugees in Sweden, so far as I could determine, and I did not personally visit the Hmong refugee centers in France--but the language needs of the Hmong in this country were what prompted my study, and I trust that some of what I learned may suggest ways of improving English language instruction for the Hmong in America, and perhaps some pitfalls to avoid.

In what follows I will first briefly outline certain policies and programs of the Swedish government with regard to immigrants and refugees, and then describe some aspects of the French resettlement programs, particularly as they have been applied to Hmong refugees in that country.

SWEDEN

Sweden, recognized especially here in Minnesota as the homeland of so many of those who emigrated from Europe to America in the last half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, has been, since the 1940s, a nation with more immigrants than emigrants; currently one million of its population of eight million are immigrants and refugees and their children (Tuohy 1981). After long maintaining a policy of strict and rapid assimilation of
all minorities into the dominant Swedish culture, the nation became in the 1970s officially a multi-ethnic and multilingual society with a number of very ambitious governmental policies designed both to support the maintenance of non-Swedish "home languages" and to ease the transition to knowledge and use of Swedish as a second language on the part of the speakers of other languages (S.Ö. 1978).

In Sweden, programs for immigrants and refugees are almost exclusively the province of government agencies rather than voluntary associations. Government language policies and practices relating to the reception and settlement of refugees in Sweden include the following.

Refugee Camps

While most of the Swedish programs apply to all immigrants and linguistic minorities, one program is designed and operated exclusively for political refugees: the reception center or refugee camp. Sweden now has four permanent camps; one in Freon, south of Stockholm, is for "boat-refugees" from Vietnam, and another in Alvesta, which I visited, serves mainly political refugees from Latin America (Börjesson, personal communication). Several other camps scattered around the country and operated temporarily at times of high refugee influx are now closed; fifteen of these camps served Indochinese refugees during the peak period of refugee arrivals in the late seventies.

Altogether Sweden admitted 2,300 Vietnamese "boat refugees" in the period 1979-80, 90 percent of whom are ethnic Chinese. Because of high unemployment the number of refugees admitted under quota is being reduced, but nevertheless 900 relatives of refugees already in Sweden were to be admitted direct from Vietnam in 1981.

In these resettlement camps, the newly arrived refugees are given clothing and medical care, orientation to life in Sweden, and the basic 240 hours of
Swedish language instruction to which every refugee is entitled, in a program of six to eight hours of instruction per day. The language program I visited at the center in Alvesta seemed to me particularly well designed, with professional full-time teachers employed through the local municipal school system. The director told me that after becoming deeply unhappy with standard textbooks and with hit-or-miss teacher-produced materials, most teachers are now using a very student-centered and functional approach in which students start the course with empty note-binders and gradually fill them with materials produced by a joint effort of teachers and students; students study how to say the practical things they want to be able to say instead of repeating endless structural drills or memorizing dialogues in which they are asked to play the roles of native speakers. The instructor operates with a syllabus in mind to guide the sequencing of grammatical material, but uses no textbook. In these classes the refugees are also given an introduction to Swedish life, including "refugee civics," and a chance to explore employment possibilities along with their language lessons.

One government official told me that the trouble with resettlement camps is that the refugees tend to stay there too long. But on the other hand the camps provide the possibility of a well-organized and professionally conducted transitional program—better than most communities could manage on their own. The real problem may be simply that the government does not allow enough funding for the sort of transitional program that many refugees—the relatively uneducated Sino-Vietnamese in particular—need. To some extent this need is recognized; I was told that the camp for Sino-Vietnamese boat people now provides 300 to 400 hours of Swedish instead of the official minimum.

**Responsibilities of Local Communes**

For immigrants other than refugees, and also for refugees that come not as part of the annual
quota but simply by appearing and requesting asylum, there are no camps. Each community is responsible for its own population, with funds reimbursed by the national government. Just as the Swedes have attempted to bring in homogenous groups—Chilean refugees or Sino-Vietnamese—under the quota, so they have also attempted—short of creating urban ghettos—to cluster the non-quota refugees into ethnic groups settled in a particular area. In Lyungby, for example, there is a Vietnamese Refugee Resettlement Program with a staff that includes a Cantonese-speaking social worker/interpreter, providing orientation, assistance, and interpreting. The commune or municipality must provide the requisite 240 hours of Swedish instruction, either itself or by assigning responsibility to one of the private educational associations which are found everywhere and are usually connected with labor unions or political parties. Many of the adult refugees in Lyungby have actually come in under the quota, spent their allotted six months in the Freon refugee camp, and then, needing more language training, been allowed to receive it through the Lyungby municipal program. In Lyungby, adult Vietnamese may attend Swedish language classes eight hours per day.

Labor Market Training

Many refugees, having failed to secure employment immediately following their allotted time in the camp, are attending one or another of the vocational schools which are open free of charge to any resident of Sweden who has lost a job or who needs training in order to secure a job. These schools have Swedish as a second language courses also. The one I visited in Växjo, however, was staffed by low-paid, part-time employees who seemed somewhat lacking in morale and some of whom were using rather ineffective and unimaginative teaching techniques. Administrators attribute the differences in apparent program quality directly to the training and professional status—full-time vs. part-time, etc.—of the teaching staffs.
Once they have secured employment, immigrants and refugees alike are permitted by law to have time off from work to attend language classes. These are usually the classes provided by the nongovernmental education associations, with reimbursement from the government. The teachers are not professionally certified, and very few are trained as Swedish language teachers, but the courses are offered tuition-free. (Virtually all adult education is subsidized by the government in Sweden—even a private study circle formed to study Renaissance poetry can receive government funds, and many such groups have been formed by immigrant and refugee groups for study of Swedish or of their own language and culture.)

These various programs provide language instruction, though often not enough and sometimes not of the highest quality, to adult refugees. What about their children?

The Home Language Program

Since 1976 Sweden has maintained a policy supporting the right of all children to receive instruction at school in their native language, whatever it may be. The so-called "Home Language Program" (S.I.V. Dokumentation 1978) is founded on linguistic and educational research showing the importance of full development of concepts and of literacy in the native language as a basis for all other learning including eventual bilingualism (S.Ö. 1980). In practice the program works as follows: the government provides funds for one hour per week of home language instruction for each child whose mother tongue is not Swedish and whose parents desire it, usually up to the sixth grade. If, however, there are thirty or, as sometimes happens, several hundred speakers of a given language in a single school system, the funds thus allocated are utilized to support several hours of home language instruction per week for a whole group of students, up to nearly full-time instruction in and through the mother tongue. The only limits on the use of the mother
tongue for instruction are the adequacy of the funds, the availability of teachers of the appropriate language background and of teaching materials, and the requirement that every child must have some instruction in Swedish. There is also of course the constraint that the child must be prepared to move into an all-Swedish program during the second cycle of classes, i.e., after the sixth grade. In the case of isolated families with one or two children in school, the school district may be unable to provide more than just a tutor, perhaps even a parent of the children, to offer the hour or two of home-language instruction to which they are entitled.

Preschool classes are not compulsory in Sweden but are available without cost. Non-Swedish-speaking children are given a high priority for admission to the preschools, and the home language laws require that home language "experiences," as distinguished from the home language "instruction" in the compulsory school, be provided at the pre-school level. There have also been experiments in bilingual education at the secondary level, but this is not required by law. (It should be noted that all education in Sweden is bilingual, quite apart from the home language program, by virtue of the fact that every student must become fully proficient in English as well as Swedish at the secondary level.)

The Swedish home language policy seems to me extremely ambitious, surpassing in breadth and duration the various types of bilingual programs found in scattered locations in the U.S. There are currently 3,000 home language teachers in Swedish schools, teaching in fifty-two different languages (Bertil Jakobsson, personal communication). As you can well imagine, there are many problems, one being the difficulty of finding adequate and appropriate materials and adequately trained teachers to provide instruction in any subject in so many different languages: actually about 140 languages are represented among the school population. The program has been criticized, as maintenance
bilingual programs in the U.S. have been, for supporting the maintenance of a separate class of immigrants instead of integrating these minorities more rapidly into the larger society. The success of this experiment is really not yet known, and it has not in fact been implemented everywhere: Sweden currently has just 8,000 children enrolled in home language classes out of a total of 86,000 students with non-Swedish home language. But its promise is great in that it provides for refugees and other minorities the possibility of full cognitive and linguistic development through the medium of the language of their home and their cultural heritage.

**Language Teacher Training**

One of the goals of my research was to learn what sorts of courses are being included in the new curricula for language teacher training which have been established. For the most part, Swedish universities are far behind the U.S. in training teachers of the national language, but at least two aspects of the curricula now being implemented in Swedish as a second language particularly interested me. Since these curricula were being developed during a time when refugee education was a major concern, there is considerable attention to the teaching of literacy along with oral language. Secondly, a curriculum developed by Gunnar Tingbjörn of Gothenburg University includes, besides linguistics and pedagogy, courses entitled "The Immigrants," "Contrastive Culture Knowledge" (dealing with particular immigrant/refugee groups) and "Social Anthropology"—courses of a type not generally required for prospective ESL teachers in the American institutions I know. Why not, I wonder, when in the U.S. so large a proportion of ESL students come from cultural traditions very different from our own and about which most teachers can be expected to know very little?
FRANCE

France has long viewed itself as a land of refuge, if not a multi-cultural society. With about one-fifth the population of the United States, France in 1980 had also accepted about one-fifth the number of refugees: 150,000 to our 750,000 (Charlot 1980: 10). Of these political refugees in France, one-third (50,000) come from Asia, according to Charlot (op. cit.). Other sources give a higher figure: a report of the French Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Health, and Social Security in November, 1979 (quoted in C.N.D.P. 1980) states that "a total of 72,000 Indo-Chinese refugees were admitted to reside in France between 1975 and the end of 1979. For 1980, a first contingent of 5,000 persons" had already been selected. A report of the Fondation pour la recherche sociale (1980) sets the number of Southeast Asian refugees in France at "more than 80,000."

Twenty-five percent of all Asian refugees in France are reported to be illiterate (Cammarota 1980: 50). According to Gros (1980), 8,000 of the refugees in France are Hmong; 82 percent of the Hmong are illiterate.

Refugee resettlement in France has been handled in a fashion that in some ways is very different from the policies of both Sweden and the United States (see also Thomas 1981). Let me say something first about the general organization of resettlement, and then about programs of language instruction.

One special feature of resettlement in France is that the government has attempted to locate the Hmong refugees in geographic areas considered especially suitable for them. Another is that, although permanent refugee reception centers have been established as in Sweden, these and virtually all other programs are run by private rather than government agencies, as is frequently the case in the United States.
The Hmong Colonies in French Guiana

A special case is the experiment in Hmong colonization in the French Department of Guyane (French Guiana), which I will describe briefly. Noting that the climate of Guiana, on the northern coast of South America, was similar to that of the plain of Laos (but ignoring the fact that the Hmong had lived as montagnards in the Laotian highlands, not on the plain) the French government arranged with local Guyanese officials to send one hundred families, about five hundred persons, to French Guiana in 1977 with the purpose of establishing a self-sufficient Hmong colony at Cacao, 70 kilometers from Cayenne, the capital. The Catholic fathers Charrier and Brix accompanied this group as directors of operations. A second colony of four hundred Hmong was established at Mana at the end of 1979 under the leadership of Father Bertrais, in what proved to be a more favorable location (Dupont-Gonin 1980: Comité National D'entraide Franco Viet-namien, Cambodgien, Laotien n.d.).

These leaders were bilingual, and the functional language of the community, for most purposes, has been Hmong. French is the primary language of instruction in the schools, as it is in all French territories, and French classes are provided for adults as well. But there are also classes in Hmong for both children and adults (M. Peraldi, quoted in Carpentier 1980).

The economy includes agriculture, production and sale of crafts, and some manufacturing. Although some of the original colonists have asked to return to France, both colonies seem to be succeeding (Dupont-Gonin 1980). The 100 couples in the first colony had 130 offspring in the first two years, and new colonists have been brought from Thailand. With a population now well over 1,000 there is an interest in bringing in more—partly to ease the problem of finding a marriage partner for young people coming of age.
On the other hand, there seemed, in September 1981, to be a question whether the new French government wants to continue to support this project. It is of particular interest in the context of language teaching because it provides the only case among Western resettlement projects in which the task of learning the language of the country is not a necessity and a major obstacle to employment and self-sufficiency. (For additional information see Comité National D'entraide... n.d. and Carpenter 1980).

Rural Resettlement of Hmong in France

Within France proper an effort was also directed toward "appropriate" geographic placement of the Hmong. The government has attempted to place the Hmong outside of the main urban centers, especially Paris, in areas where permanent jobs are more plentiful and housing is less expensive (Lacaze 1980). As a result, of the 8,000 Hmong in France there are still very few in Paris. Many have deliberately been placed in villages located in the mountainous areas of the southeast of France (G.R.E.T.A. of Digne 1979). This was done rather naively, perhaps, through a misunderstanding of the reasons (political rather than topographic) why the Hmong have chosen to live in the mountains in the past (Yang Dao, personal communication). Some of these French mountain areas are hot in summer but very cold and unpleasant in the winter, and traditional patterns of agriculture are not possible. Also, of course, the Hmong have not been happy when dispersed in rural areas, because of the importance they attach to close family ties (A.D.R.E.S. 1980: 24, 34). Moreover, as in the United States, small communities with few refugees have been unable to mount adequate language and social service programs (Gros 1980:53).

The Resettlement Process

As already noted, resettlement in France is carried out almost entirely by voluntary agencies, supported by government funds. Each agency has been
assigned one specialized function in the resettlement process (de Wangen 1980). Outside of France, Écoles sans frontières (Schools Without Political Boundaries) operates French language classes in Thailand and attempts to find sponsors. The French Red Cross is responsible for meeting refugees at the airport and taking care of their immediate needs. Another voluntary agency, France Terre d'asile (France, Land of Asylum) operates Transit Centers which provide shelter and health screening, etc., for a period of two weeks. Refugees who enter under quota, unless they already have a sponsor who can accept them immediately, move from the Transit Centers to what are called "Centres Provisoires d'Hebergement," temporary lodging centers or hostels, where they can receive citizenship training and social orientation, their legally authorized 240 hours of French language instruction, and some training for employment; they may even begin part-time work while in a Center. Run by local volunteer agencies, these centers are located in towns outside of the major urban areas, and they attempt to find employment and housing for the refugees, when they leave, in the same region. Refugees are supposed to stay in the centers for only three to six months, and then to find housing and get a job—in short to become immediately self-sufficient. Many, however, and particularly the Hmong, are not ready for employment in so short a time, and there is rather little help available to them beyond the initial period in the Center. Catholic Charities plays a role in assisting the refugees who do not go to the centers but rather choose resettlement in "milieu ouvert"—in the open community—and those who have left the centers; but funding for such programs is limited.

**Language Programs for Adults**

Still another voluntary organization, called C.I.M.A.D.E., has been given general responsibility for French language instruction for adults, primarily in the Temporary Lodging Centers but also in Paris and other locations where there are concentrations of refugees (Gros 1980: personal communication.)
The role of C.I.M.A.D.E. is to organize language classes in each locality, and to provide coordination, direction, teacher training, and evaluation. The actual instruction is provided through other organizations such as the Alliance Française and through locally established programs. In the Centers, French classes usually are offered three to four hours a day, five days per week, for three or four months.

A major problem for the language teacher is the heterogeneity within small groups of students. The classes include more and more who are illiterate and unschooled: among Southeast Asians 23 percent have had no schooling in their first language (Gros 1980). Another problem is well-stated in this quotation:

There is a question whether the commencement of language training only a few days after arrival is opportune. How can one assimilate a language at the same time that one is dealing with psychological problems (due to imprisonment, privation, months spent in a camp, the fact of having left one's country, perhaps forever) or problems of a physical nature (health, diet, climate) which produce in many cases a phenomenon of rejection of the new language during the first weeks of study or sometimes for several months? At the same time, the center often provides the only possibility the refugees have of acquiring, without great hardship, the fundamentals of French. Afterwards, they are often tied up with a tiring job which leaves little time and little desire for study.

(Gros 1980: 53 (my translation))

The instructors are permitted to choose their own methods, which very often involve an audio-lingual approach developed for foreign students in academic programs; there are well-written materials for use in this approach which provide support for the teacher with little training or experience. But the inappropriateness of standard textbooks, which do not deal with basic problems of literacy or with
practical "survival skills," is obvious to the more experienced teacher. Thus in some of the programs teachers are experimenting with approaches to teaching literacy, with the creation of dialogues based on the immediate situation, and with group outings or the recreation of community settings in the classroom. C.I.M.A.D.E. has established short teacher-training courses designed to introduce these more appropriate methods to other teachers. In addition, C.I.M.A.D.E. has recommended funding for a 60-hour precourse dealing with life in France and survival skills, and taught in the students' own language, to be added as a transition to the regular language course (Gros 1980).

Another organization involved in teaching French to Southeast Asian refugees in France has developed a particularly interesting instructional program of the sort that seems to be needed. A.D.A.P. (Association pour la Diffusion, l'Adaptation et la Préformation) has been given a role in assisting with the general linguistic and social adaptation of Southeast Asian refugees outside the Centers and primarily in Paris (de Calan, Mor, and Soukhavong 1980). A.D.A.P. has developed a curriculum in which language instruction is but one aspect of an integrated program of studies designed to aid an individual in adapting his or her life to a new linguistic and social environment. Instructional units are organized around problem areas in the lives of the students: housing, shopping, cooking, seeking employment, etc. In each area the focus is on the necessary adaptation (physical, cultural, psychological, social, linguistic, vocational, technical) to the realities of the new environment. The adaptation in each of these spheres to a particular problem, such as housing, is conceived as having several aspects: to establish oneself, to become informed and to understand, to take various actions, and to make changes, react, and choose among options. Language instruction takes place entirely in the context of learning, acting, and responding to the realities of a given area of daily life. The instructors are often bilinguals who know the native language of their students and
with them can develop understanding and use of the practical language of everyday life. (For a detailed description of this program see A.D.A.P. 1978).

Language Programs for Children

The public schools in France are expected to provide special French language classes for children who do not speak French as natives, but these do not exist everywhere that they are needed, and one gets the impression that the quality is uneven, partly because there are few professionally trained teachers available. Officials are aware that refugee and migrant children have a very poor record of success on the all-important general examinations required for advancement through the educational system. There are apparently no schools in which home languages other than French are used for instruction, although the need for such instruction is currently being discussed (M. Andreasson, UNHCR, personal communication).

Teacher Training

Although university-level programs to train French language teachers exist, of course, the traditional emphasis on teaching French as a foreign language, appropriate to overseas programs and programs for international students, has persisted. Thus, as in this country, professionally trained teachers are faced with the problem of adapting their methods to the needs of refugees and migrants resident in the country. Many of the public schools apparently have not made the distinction between the roles of the French class for children who speak the language and the language class for French language learners, and their teachers very often are not trained to teach French as a second language. Language teachers in the voluntary programs most often receive training only within the organizations that employ them.
SUMMARY

I have attempted to describe Swedish and French refugee resettlement and language programs as they affect refugee groups such as the Sino-Vietnamese in Sweden and the Ĥmong in France. Both countries provide rather intensive language instruction and social orientation to newly arrived refugees in special camps or centers before they are expected to establish themselves in the open community. The government-run adult language and job training programs in Sweden are more numerous and probably meet the needs of refugees better in general than the privately organized programs in France; through the home-language programs, Sweden has progressed much farther in providing appropriate education for refugee children, but there are not enough trained teachers. In both countries at least a few innovative programs of instruction provide intensive student-centered and community-based learning with adequate attention to development of functional skills in both speaking and writing, responding effectively to the problems that teachers of refugees everywhere are struggling to solve.

NOTES

*This study was made possible by a grant from the Small Grants Research Program of the Office of International Programs, University of Minnesota, and by the warm generosity of many people who welcomed me into their offices and classrooms and in some cases their homes and who showed infinite patience with my questions. Among many to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude I must mention at least the following: M. Andreasson of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, Sven Börjesson, Stig Eliasson, Ulla Ericsson, John Glarner, Patricia Gros, Kristina Gross, Thomas Hammar, Bertil Jakobsson, Katrin Maandi, Hans Ring, Gunnar Tingbjörm, Birgitta Ulvhämmar, and Yang Dao. All have contributed much to my understanding of language teaching and resettlement activities in Europe; none bears any responsibility for the errors I have no doubt made in transmitting what they told me.

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2. Bertil Jakobsson told me "Sweden started out like other countries, giving immigrant children instruction in Swedish first; then we were informed by research that delayed second language acquisition was better, and children should first gain a good knowledge of their home language. Finally we realized that the development of the whole personality was involved, not just language learning."

REFERENCES


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320 16th Avenue S.E.
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN 55455
The immigration of nearly half a million refugees from Southeast Asia since 1975 has generated renewed pedagogical and theoretical interest in second language acquisition in the United States. The first immigrants to arrive from Southeast Asia after 1975 were generally well served by traditional programs for teaching English as a second language (ESL). The characteristics of these immigrants were similar to those of many previous immigrants served by adult ESL programs—relatively high levels of formal education, literacy, work experience and exposure to urban life and Western values. The more recently arrived Southeast Asian immigrants, however, are not as well prepared in this regard. Relatively few have any previous education or work experience relevant to an industrialized economy or exposure to urban life or Western technology and values. In addition to the enormous economic and cultural adjustment facing immigrants with such a background, special problems seem to arise for these adults in learning English. Traditional approaches to ESL instruction, oriented towards educated and literate adults, have had to be redesigned to serve this new population.

Reductions in public assistance provided to refugees have created substantial pressure on the immigrants to learn English, and on language training programs to teach it quickly and cost-effectively. Amidst many practically oriented discussions of how to design new adult language training programs, some interesting theoretical questions arise: What factors affect an immigrant population's acquisition of the new language? What factors influence an individual adult's acquisition? How much can formal training in the target language accelerate its acquisition?
Some of these issues have been considered before in research on the development of bilingualism. It is easy to forget, in discussions of alternative methodologies and curricula, that the individual immigrant's acquisition of English is only one facet of the overall community's development of bilingualism, a sociological phenomenon intimately bound up with prevailing social and economic conditions (Fishman 1972). These conditions in turn shape the motivations and opportunities for contact between speakers of the immigrant and host languages. This socially organized matrix of motivations and opportunities in large part determines the immigrants' acquisition of the host language. The individual's social motivations for native language maintenance (e.g., to strengthen ethnic identity) and for acquisition and use of the host language (e.g., to be accepted by the wider society) as well as the attitudes of the host population towards the immigrant group are often critical factors in learning the new language (Gardner & Lambert 1972).

Within this broad sociological framework, other factors operate to determine the individual immigrant's acquisition of the second language. Lambert and associates have examined some of the affective and motivational variables influencing children's and adolescents' acquisition of second languages. Differences in cognitive abilities may also underlie observed individual differences in second language acquisition (Gardner, Smythe, Kirby & Bramwell 1974). Experiential factors, too, such as previous schooling, native language literacy, or acquisition of another non-native language, may impact an individual's learning a new language. Most research, however, has been conducted on children and adolescents; few methodologically adequate studies of adults' acquisition of second languages have been carried out. Reviews of studies of individual differences among adults are presented by Fathman (1975) and Schumann (1975).
Although children and adults frequently learn second languages in the absence of formal training, little is known about the impact of formal instruction (such as ESL) on second language acquisition. There is evidence that some individuals' acquisition is facilitated by formal language training, both among children (e.g., Gardner et al 1974) and adults (e.g., Krashen 1977). But it is not clear whether all individuals benefit from such training or which individuals benefit most. Krashen (1976, 1977) argues that informal acquisition of a second language is more important than formal, academic language learning, but the evidence he presents is inconclusive. Tucker (1977) and Gardner et al (1974), among others, have suggested that individuals' cognitive abilities determine the impact which formal language training has on their second language acquisition. In the Gardner et al (1974) model, for example, differences in individuals' "intelligence" affect the results of formal language learning but have no effect on informal language acquisition. Unfortunately, there is no hard evidence to support such speculations. Further research on such matters, particularly for adult learners, could address some of the theoretical and practical issues posed above concerning the role of formal language training in refugee resettlement.

THE NEWTON STUDY

Some of these issues are being investigated in a study of English acquisition within a community of Hmong immigrants in Newton. The Hmong settlement in Newton numbers nearly 3,000, making it one of the largest Hmong communities in the United States. Part of a larger cross-cultural investigation of adult language and literacy development (Reder & Green 1981), the Newton study is using a variety of research methods to examine the development of oral and written English in a Hmong community. Although ethnographic research methods, grounded in close contact with a network of Hmong families, form the core of the study, this paper describes a household survey conducted to provide a picture of the entire
Hmong community of Newton and the relation between individuals' background characteristics and their acquisition of English.

**Method**

The survey instrument, written in Hmong, was designed for in-home oral interviews conducted in Hmong by bilingual assistants. Six young Hmong men served as interviewers. Although information was collected about each member of the household, only one member of the household (almost always an elder male) was interviewed during the session. The survey required an average of 45 minutes to complete.

Minimal information was collected about each household member: name, sex, age and relationship to other household members. For individuals 12 years of age or older, additional information was collected: arrival date in the U.S.; years of schooling, if any, in Laos and the U.S.; proficiency at reading Hmong, writing Hmong, speaking Lao, reading Lao, writing Lao; speaking English, reading English, and writing English.

Additional information was gathered through a series of questions about the respondent's personal history, employment and English training, and about the household's economic and religious status, migration history, and so forth. A final open-ended question enabled the respondent to raise any problems or issues of concern.

All Hmong households in Newton were to be included in the survey. Households were enumerated by name and address from a variety of sources: staff knowledge, telephone directory, public agencies, educational institutions, Hmong clan and mutual assistance associations. The interviewers located additional households by regularly inquiring about other nearby Hmong families wherever they went.

Although households were not compensated for participating, the Hmong community cooperated fully
with the survey: only 2 out of 334 households contacted refused to be interviewed. In all, 332 households, comprising 2496 individuals, were interviewed during April 1981, which is estimated to be approximately 90-95 percent of the community's population at that time.  

A SKETCH OF NEWTON'S HMONG COMMUNITY

In this section some basic results of the survey are presented. There is not space to consider most of the survey results in detail here; only a brief sketch will be made of some findings so that results and analyses pertinent to English acquisition can be presented in greater detail.  

Migration from Laos to Newton

The Hmong have a long history of migration within Southeast Asia. During the past two centuries, they have migrated progressively southward from China through the hills and mountain tops of northern Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. Hmong immigrants in the U.S. are natives of Laos. Most fled their native country after the fall of the Royal Lao government in 1975. Most of Newton's Hmong originated in the southern provinces of Luang Prabang, Sayaboury and Vang Vieng. The percentage of Newton's households from the various provinces are listed in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Louang Prabang</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayaboury</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xieng Khuang</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vang Vieng</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vientiene</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Others)</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 displays the distribution of dates when individuals entered Thailand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior to 1975</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most individuals (86 percent) entered Thailand from Laos between 1975 and 1979. By April 1976 half of the Newton Hmong population had entered Thailand. The busiest year was 1975 in which 36 percent of the respondents left Laos for Thailand.

The Thai government established a number of camps along the Thailand-Laos border to accommodate the rapid influx of refugees from Laos. The main camps in which Newton's Hmong resided are Nam Yao (40.1 percent), Vinay (26.5 percent) and Soptuang (21.3 percent); the remaining (11.1 percent) of families stayed in other camps.

The length of time spent in Thailand before leaving for the United States is displayed in Table 3. Thirty percent of the respondents stayed in a Thai camp longer than four years. Many factors influenced the length of time individuals stayed in Thailand before coming to the United States. Potential immigrants had to have sponsors in the United States and (until the end of the 1970s) United States immigration policies gave higher priorities to those individuals with formal education and literacy.
TABLE 3. Years Spent in Thailand Camps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 or less</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 5</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sponsorship at first was provided principally through church groups and associated American families. Missionary activity by American church groups was intense in the camps and many Hmong families converted to Western religions, some hoping this would facilitate resettlement in the United States. Once sufficient numbers of Hmong families had immigrated to establish communities in the United States, however, Hmong families increasingly became the sponsors for their relatives and friends still in Thailand. Overall, 76 percent of the respondents were sponsored by Hmong families, 14 percent by American families and 10 percent by church and other organizations.

U.S. entry dates for each individual 12 years of age or older were converted into lengths of time which individuals had been in the United States as of May 1981. Table 4 exhibits these data grouped into six-month intervals.

Within the United States, Hmong families move frequently from city to city and state to state. Thao (this volume), noting that many characteristics of the Hmong secondary migration in the United States derive from traditional migration patterns in Laos, identifies a variety of "reunification" and "betterment" motives which underlie the migration of Hmong families from one locale to another. Twenty-
nine percent of the survey respondents indicated they had lived in another state before coming to Newton. Most of these "secondary settlers" came to Newton from some nearby western state.

TABLE 4. Length of Time Since Arrival in the U.S. (as of 5/81)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5 months</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-11 months</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-17 months</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-23 months</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-29 months</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-35 months</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36+ months</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1381</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even within a given urban area such as Newton, households move frequently from one part of the city to another; although there are many reasons for such intra-city moves (e.g., to obtain better housing, to leave high-crime neighborhoods), in many cases such moves serve to bring related households into closer proximity.

Each household was asked how long it had been residing in its current dwelling and in how many other domiciles it had lived in Newton. The distribution of residence in the current dwelling (39 percent: 3 months or less; 25 percent: 4-6 months; 18 percent: 7-9 months; 8 percent: 10-12 months; 14 percent: longer than a year) gives one indication of the mobility of the population within Newton. Thirty-seven percent reported having lived in Newton only in the current dwelling, 26 percent in one other dwelling, 30 percent in two other dwellings, 5 percent in three other dwellings, and 2 percent in four or five other dwellings. Interviewers noted whether households lived in apartments or houses (i.e.,
multiple or single unit dwellings). Sixty-one percent of the units were classified as apartments, 39 percent as houses.

The range of household sizes was 1 to 19, with a mean size of 7.5. The average household size is quite similar to that described for traditional Hmong settlements in rural Laos and Thailand. The comparable average household size in each case is between 7 and 8, a remarkable similarity given the radical differences in housing types and overall environments. Despite a similar average, unusually large (up to 19) and small (down to 1) household sizes occur in Newton.

The composition of the Newton households adheres to the traditional pattern as well. Multi-generation and multi-nuclear households are generally composed according to traditional rules for a Hmong household. But in this new environment, some exceptions do occur. There are a few households, for example, in which a brother and his married sister, or a husband and his wife's relatives live together.

Religious, Material and Economic Status

Respondents were asked if any member of their household attended a church in Newton. Sixty-one percent of the households had no member attending church, whereas 39 percent had at least one member attending church.

The survey inquired about each household's possession of a telephone, television and car. Possession of these items reflects increasing material status, apparently among both Americans and Hmong in Newton. Seventy-five percent of the households have a telephone, 66 percent have a TV, and 34 percent have a car. Telephones are more likely to be found in houses as opposed to apartments; neighboring Hmong households in apartment complexes often share a phone. Telephones are also more likely found in households attending church or in which someone works. Televisions and cars are also more likely
found in households in which someone works but are not associated with religious status.

Several survey questions inquired about the sources of income which the household has and whether individuals in the household have jobs. Ninety-two percent of the households receive income from public assistance, 25 percent from work, and about 1 percent each from unemployment insurance and "other" sources (e.g., a church sponsor).10 These figures sum to over 100 percent because some households have multiple sources of income: 80 percent have one source (almost always welfare), 20 percent have two sources (almost always work and welfare) and only one household reported having three or more sources. Follow-up questions about the type of jobs held indicated that most of the "jobs" reported in this survey were full-time. It's important to point out that the effective unemployment rate within this community is no doubt much higher than these figures suggest; most households are much larger than the average U.S. household, and comprise several adults.

INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

The Hmong population of Newton is divided evenly among males and females; 50.4 percent of the survey sample is male. Individuals' ages vary from 0 (infants) to 91, but this is a very young population whose average age is 19.2 years. The median age is 13.6, which indicates that half the population is under 14 years old. In fact, 22 percent of the population is less than 5 years old; 76 percent is under 30 years of age.

Figure 1 illustrates the breakdown of the population by sex and by age, using the standard 5-year age groups. Notice how young the bulk of the population is, and how evenly divided it is between males and females at all ages.
FIGURE 1

The Age and Sex Profile

of the Hmong in Newton
Background characteristics gathered about individuals aged 12 and older are grouped by age and sex in several tables later. Table 5 displays the distribution of males and females in age decades for individuals 12 and older. The roughly equal numbers in each cell should be kept in mind later when other individual characteristics are broken down into these age and sex groups.

**TABLE 5. Population Aged 12 and Over By Age and Sex**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 and up</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>1396</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lao Literacy**

Lao, the official language of Laos, was used by some Hmong in trade, school, and other contacts with the wider society of Laos. Many Hmong individuals learned Lao as a second language through these contacts, and such experience in bilingual environments may well influence subsequent acquisition of English in the United States.

The distribution of spoken Lao proficiency among the Hmong of Newton is shown in Table 6. Table 6 shows the proficiency as rated on a 5-point scale, with 1 being the lowest (the individual speaks Lao.
"not at all") and 5 the highest rating (the individual speaks Lao "well"). Each cell is the average proficiency of the individuals in that particular age-by-sex group (refer to Table 5 for the number of individuals in each group). The average proficiencies for men and women (all ages pooled together) are given in the bottom row of the table, whereas the average proficiencies for the various age groups (pooling men and women) are shown in the rightmost column of the table. The lower righthand figure, 2.50, is the average proficiency of all individuals in the sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 and up</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Substantial differences can be seen between the spoken Lao proficiency of men and women, at all ages; Hmong men speak Lao better than women, no doubt because they tended to travel more, be more involved in commercial dealings with other groups (for which Lao was used), and interact more with outsiders generally. No monotone effects of age, however, are evident in these data. The depression in the youngest age group reflects the fact that these youngsters fled Laos when they were quite young.
Educational Status

Most Hmong in Newton came from the highlands of Laos, where there were few opportunities or needs for schooling. Only within the last generation were schools established in some rural villages, and those did not go beyond the third grade. To obtain further education, one had to live in a provincial town to attend a government school modeled on the French system.

Table 7 shows the distribution of years of schooling; as can be seen, although a relatively small number of individuals did attend school in Laos for varying amounts of time, the majority (73 percent) never went to school at all.\textsuperscript{13}

TABLE 7. Years of Schooling in Laos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1023</td>
<td>73.1</td>
<td>73.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>76.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>80.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>85.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>88.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>91.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>95.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>96.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>98.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>98.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>99.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.0</td>
<td>99.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>99.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1399</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who are the relative few who did receive some education in Laos? Table 8 shows the percentages of individuals in the various age and sex groups who received at least some formal education in Laos. There are statistically reliable differences between
older and younger individuals' educational status and between men's and women's; older individuals have less education and women less than men (at all ages). There is a regular trend over age: the younger the age group, the higher the percentage of individuals with some schooling. There is a slight downswing in the youngest group (those now 12-19) only because of the tremendous disruption of education caused by the recent civil war in Laos.

TABLE 8. Percent Educated In Laos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 and up</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

That older people have lower educational status seems to reflect the recent introduction of schools in rural Laos. That women have received less schooling than men is said to reflect the expense of sending a child to school coupled with the fact that an educated daughter cannot later "repay" her family—after marriage, she joins her husband's family, whereas a man remains with his original family which subsequently benefits from his education. Other cultural values also tended to favor boys rather than girls going to school.
Literacy in Lao

Individuals' literacy in the Lao language was also rated on a five-point proficiency scale. Being the national language of Laos and the initial medium of instruction in the schools, attaining literacy in Lao was a major objective of instruction in schools which the Hmong attended. It should not be surprising, then, that years of schooling in Laos is highly correlated with literacy in Lao ($r = .72$). Since many individuals learned to speak Lao outside of school, it is not surprising that the correlation between schooling and spoken proficiency in Laos is considerably weaker ($r = .52$). Table 9 displays the distribution of Lao literacy across the familiar age and sex groups of Newton's Hmong immigrants. The pattern seen here—men much more literate than women at all ages and increasing literacy with decreasing age (except for the downswing in the youngest group) closely resembles the pattern seen above for schooling. Notice that virtually none of the older women have any Lao literacy skills at all (remember, 1.00 is the lowest possible score).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 and up</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Literacy in Hmong

Orthographies for writing the native Hmong language were introduced in Laos during the last few decades by missionary and military groups. The Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA) orthography has gained currency recently in refugee camps in Thailand and among immigrant communities in the U.S. Contemporary uses of Hmong literacy in Newton include correspondence between friends and relatives (both within the U.S. and internationally, between the U.S. and Thailand, France, Canada and other resettlement countries), spontaneous note taking in ESL classes (both for transliterating the pronunciation of an unknown word and for transcribing its meaning in Hmong), record keeping (e.g., posting a list of phone numbers on the wall), liturgical uses in churches, and for distributing public information (e.g., signs at public gatherings, circulars from social service agencies).

Table 10 displays the distribution of Hmong literacy in the Newton community, measured in the same five-point proficiency scale. Notice that the trends evident in this table are similar to those seen for Lao literacy in the previous table. Young individuals are more literate, and men are more literate than women. Notice that despite this similarity, however, the overall level of Hmong literacy (an average proficiency of 2.39) is significantly higher than that of Lao literacy (1.88). This difference is not due to more highly developed literacy skills in Hmong than in Lao among those who have some literacy, but rather reflects the broader access of the population to Hmong as opposed to Lao literacy. For example, 43 percent of those aged 12 and older are reported to have at least "a bit" (scale value of 2) of Hmong literacy, compared to only 29 percent for Lao literacy. Comparing Tables 9 and 10, we can see that the difference is concentrated among the younger men and women who, of course, no longer can acquire Lao literacy through the traditional means of schooling, but who can and do become literate in Hmong through informal study.
in the refugee camps in Thailand. Few of the older people are literate in either system. Despite their different means of acquisition, there is a moderate correlation (r = .54) between Lao and Hmong literacy skills.

**TABLE 10. Literacy in Hmong**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 and up</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH**

Each household member’s English proficiency was rated by the respondent on a five-point scale. Considerable care was taken to develop as valid and reliable a rating scale as possible. From close contact with a network of Hmong families, it was possible to learn how the Hmong talk among themselves about each others’ English speaking skills, including terms used spontaneously to describe the stages of learning English. The terms displayed in Table 11 were presented orally as alternative answers from which the respondent chose. Interviewers were carefully trained to take the necessary time and care to elicit candid ratings.
TABLE 11. English Proficiency Rating Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hmong Term</th>
<th>Scale Value</th>
<th>English Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tsi tau li</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>me me</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>a bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>me ntsis</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>a little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ib nrab</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zoo</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>well</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall distribution of oral English proficiencies for individuals aged 12 years and older is listed in Table 12. Over 37 percent of the population is rated at the lowest proficiency level (i.e., speaking English "not at all"). The median proficiency level is 2.05. Over 60 percent of the population (12 and older) speaks English less than "a little."

These proficiency ratings were validated in a number of ways. First, a small subset of the households interviewed were families well known to the author; ratings collected in the survey for these individuals were highly correlated with their known English capabilities. Second, the English proficiency ratings of a much larger subset of individuals were verified against records of local ESL programs serving the Hmong population. The ratings and placement levels of the students within the programs correspond closely. Of the 230 adults in the survey sample currently enrolled in one of these local programs, only six had English proficiency ratings above "3" (these six were all "4s"); the rest were distributed among the "1s," "2s," and "3s." All Hmong identified in the survey as holding white collar jobs, on the other hand, had proficiencies rated above the "3" level.16

Table 13 displays the average proficiency rating for each of the age and sex groups. There is a fairly uniform sex difference across all ages;
men have higher proficiency ratings than women. There is also a systematic trend over age; the older the speaker, the lower the proficiency (except for a slight downturn in the youngest group of males).

**TABLE 12. Oral English Proficiencies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficiency Level</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 not at all</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 a bit</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 a little</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>88.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 fair</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 well</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1399</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 13. Oral English Proficiencies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 and up</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The systematic differences between men and women, which show up here in all age groups, are both striking and curious. They will be easier to interpret later after other sex-related differences are
taken into account. The profound age-grading of English acquisition apparent here is less surprising. There are many published reports of age-related differences in second language acquisition, all of which suggest older individuals' acquisition is slower. Numerous explanations have been proposed to account for this age effect, including ones based on biological maturation—for example, post-pubescent individuals are biologically less capable of acquiring new languages [e.g., Penfield & Roberts 1959; Lenneberg 1967; Krashen 1975; Rosansky 1976]—and ones based on affective differences—older individuals' motivations, interests, and strategies for making social adjustments are less appropriate for second language learning [e.g., Gardner & Lambert 1972; Schumann 1975].

In the present data, the systematic effects of age across the lifespan suggest that factors other than just biological maturation are operating. Observation of Hmong resettlement in Newton indicates that older individuals display different attitudes towards learning English and have less social contact with English speakers and thus have fewer opportunities to learn.

**Proficiency as a Function of Time**

Naturally, we expect English-speaking proficiency to increase over time spent in the United States. The most direct evidence, of this, of course, would be longitudinal data comparing an individual's proficiency at different points in time. In the present data, individual proficiency data can be examined cross-sectionally in relation to length of time in the U.S. These data are displayed in Table 14.

English proficiency is broken down according to the length of time individuals have been in the U.S. (at the time of the survey). The curves for men and women (not shown here) are roughly parallel with men having higher proficiencies than women in every time period.
TABLE 14. Acquisition of English Over Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Months in the U.S.</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>24</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>36</th>
<th>to</th>
<th>to</th>
<th>to</th>
<th>to</th>
<th>to</th>
<th>and</th>
<th>up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Proficiency</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In interpreting these cross-sectional data as acquisition curves, caution is due because the background characteristics of incoming Hmong immigrants have been steadily changing over time, too. Although these breakdowns are not displayed here, the educational, linguistic and literacy status of Hmong refugees entering the United States have systematically changed over time; earlier arriving refugees speak more Lao, have more previous education, and are more literate in the Lao language, characteristics which have steadily decreased among progressively more recent immigrants. Since there is some reason to suspect that some of these characteristics themselves may influence second language acquisition [Reeder 1977; Gardner, et al 1974] care must be taken to avoid confounding the effects of time in the U.S. (exposure to English) with the effects due to a changing mix of individuals' background characteristics over time. This will be considered next.

English Proficiency in Terms of Background Characteristics

The relationship between previous schooling in Laos and oral English proficiency is displayed in Table 15. The mean proficiency rating is tabulated as a function of years of schooling in Laos. English proficiency increases steadily with increasing years of previous education in Laos.

Table 16 displays relationships between English proficiency and some other individual characteristics considered before. English proficiency increases regularly and markedly in relation to each of the
three background characteristics: spoken Lao proficiency, Lao literacy, and Hmong literacy.

TABLE 15. English Proficiency by Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Schooling in Laos</th>
<th>Average Proficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 and up</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 16. Average English Proficiency in Relation to Other Linguistic Proficiencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficiency at using:</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lao (oral)</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao (written)</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmong (written)</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are many possible factors underlying these relationships. Formal education is well known to have major effects on intellectual performance in general [Vygotsky 1962; Cole and Scribner 1974; Cole 1978] and might facilitate second language acquisition. Knowledge of spoken Lao, too, traditionally associated with contact with outsiders and bilingual functioning, could also facilitate subsequent acquisition of English; the experience of learning one second language may produce helpful skills, strategies, motivations and interests for later learning another one. Unfortunately, there is little controlled research on this.
The apparent influence of literacy on the acquisition of English is also of considerable interest. As the by-product of education in Laos, Lao literacy can be expected to have effects similar to those of schooling. Separating the effects of literacy from those of education, however, has generally proved to be difficult [Scribner & Cole 1978]. That literacy in the native Hmong language also appears to facilitate acquisition is of interest in this regard, since it is not so highly associated with formal schooling; most individuals literate in Hmong learned to read and write it informally, through self-study or tutoring by a friend or relative. At this point, it is not clear why Hmong literacy facilitates English acquisition. Robson (this volume) found that Hmong literacy helped adult students taking ESL classes in refugee camps in Thailand. In ESL classes here, students deploy their Hmong literacy to take notes, which suggests it may have an instrumental role in the formal study of English.

Summary. The acquisition of English in Newton's Hmong community has been examined at one point in time through a series of cross-sectional "slices." Sharp trends were found with regard to both age and sex; men are more proficient than women and younger persons are more proficient than older ones. Less clear is how to interpret these trends. We also found that other characteristics—such as previous education and literacy—are similarly distributed among members of the community. This suggests that more than the usual care must be taken with this data base in attempting to identify causal factors underlying English acquisition. For example, it may be that the sex difference observed in English proficiency is not due directly to differences between men's and women's rate of acquisition, but rather to differences between men's and women's background characteristics (e.g., education, literacy) which do directly influence English acquisition.

A similar ambiguity arises with regard to using cross-sectional data from this population to index changes in English proficiency over time. Although observed English proficiency rises steadily as a function of individuals' time in the U.S., as
expected, such cross-tabulations alone do not indicate how much of the apparent change is due to genuine acquisition and how much is due to spurious correlation between time and other variables which directly affect acquisition. For example, the more recently Hmong immigrants arrive in the United States, the less previous education and literacy (in Lao) they tend to have. Since previous education and literacy are positively related to English proficiency, it is necessary to control simultaneously the apparent "effects" of time in the U.S., past education and literacy in analyzing acquisition of English.

Predicting Acquisition of English

Multivariate analyses of the survey data are able to exert such controls statistically and remove much of the ambiguity. Multiple regression analyses were conducted on the data to predict individuals' English proficiency as functions of their demographic characteristics (age, sex), experiences prior to coming to the United States (education in Laos, proficiency in spoken Lao, written Lao, and written Hmong) and length of time in the United States. Many other survey variables were included in these regression analyses, but turned out not to be significantly related to the Hmong's English acquisition, and so are not considered here.

Consider the following equation as a predictor of English proficiency:

\[ E = c + b_1 \cdot AGE + b_2 \cdot LAOSPK = b_3 \cdot TIMEUS + b_4 \cdot HMONGLIT + b_5 \cdot LAOLIT + b_6 \cdot EDLAOS \]

Where:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>English proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>age in years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAOSPK</td>
<td>spoken Lao proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIMEUS</td>
<td>months since arrival in the U.S.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HMONGLIT = Hmong literacy proficiency  
LAOLIT = Lao literacy proficiency  
EDLAOS = years of schooling in Laos

the c and b's are the estimated constant and regression coefficients, whose values are shown in Table 17.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>.0139</td>
<td>.1997</td>
<td>96.57</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAOSPK</td>
<td>.1367</td>
<td>.2024</td>
<td>65.85</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIMEUS</td>
<td>.0147</td>
<td>.1491</td>
<td>52.45</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMONGLIT</td>
<td>.1396</td>
<td>.2164</td>
<td>93.12</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAOLIT</td>
<td>.1084</td>
<td>.1454</td>
<td>18.48</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDLAOS</td>
<td>.0380</td>
<td>.0855</td>
<td>8.17</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>1.3467</td>
<td></td>
<td>340.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table summarizes several important findings. Each of the variables in the table is a statistically significant predictor of an individual's English proficiency after effects due to all the other variables in the equation have been statistically controlled. This equation (looking at the adjusted R² value at the top of the table) predicts about 58 percent of the variance in the dependent variable, English proficiency rating (based on 1,336 individuals aged 12 and over).

The b values are the coefficients for the corresponding variables in the equation. The magnitude of a b coefficient depends on both the relative importance of the corresponding variable in predicting the dependent variable and on the scale of measurement of the variable. The b coefficient for AGE or
TIMEU, with everything else equal, will be relatively small since the variables have such a broad range (compared to, say, the proficiency ratings). To get an idea of the relative predictive strengths of the variables in the equation, all variables must be standardized (i.e., transformed to have a zero mean and unit variance). If each of the independent and the dependent variables is standardized in this way, then the Beta values in the table are the coefficients in the equation. Since all standardized variables have the same variance, the magnitude of the Betas in the table reflect the relative predictive strengths of the variables. The F-values in the table provide tests of the statistical significance for each variable to enter the equation; the larger the F-value, the more likely the true value of the corresponding Beta coefficient is non-zero (Beta = 0 is the null hypothesis that the variable is not in the equation). The rightmost "significance" column is the probability that the observed F-value is actually different than zero (e.g., .001 means that probability is less than .001).

Several important results emerge from this regression analysis. First, SEX does not enter the predictive equation for English proficiency, despite the substantial differences observed between males' and females' English proficiencies. Recall that sex differences were also observed in educational, linguistic and literacy status noted earlier; in other regression equations not shown here, SEX is a major predictor of EDLAOS, LAOLIT, LAOSPK and HMONGLIT. Because of differences in men's and women's social roles in traditional Hmong culture, men had more opportunities for engaging in outside contacts (and hence to learn the Lao language) and for going to school (and hence to acquire more formal education and literacy in Lao). Men tended to have broader linguistic, literacy and educational backgrounds. But once the effects of these background characteristics are controlled statistically (through entry in the regression equation), SEX no longer predicts the individual's English proficiency.
Some of these background characteristics—literacy and educational status—are also systematically associated with individuals' age. Because of historical changes in Hmong culture and Lao society, younger men and women had more opportunity to acquire an education and Lao literacy than their older counterparts. But AGE remains in the predictive equation even after the effects of these background variables are statistically controlled. Unlike SEX, which drops out of the regression at this point, AGE itself has direct effects on the Hmong's acquisition of English. That its coefficient is negative tells us, of course, that increasing age is associated with decreasing English proficiency; older refugees are acquiring less English (or at least at a slower rate).

We saw above that some background characteristics, such as LAOSPK, LAOLIT and EDLAOS were positively associated with TIMEUS: Earlier arriving refugees tended to be more educated, more literate, and so forth. The fact that TIMEUS remains in the equation (with a positive coefficient), even after the effects of these important background variables have been statistically controlled, indicates that the observed relationship between English proficiency and time spent in the United States does indeed reflect the acquisition of English.

Conversely, the fact that LAOSPK, LAOLIT, HMONG-LIT and EDLAOS remain in the equation (with positive coefficients) after confounding correlations with time have been controlled indicates that previous education, literacy and competence in another second language directly facilitate Hmong adults' acquisition of English.

Effect of ESL Instruction on Adult English Acquisition

The survey collected information about the extent of adults' ESL training. For adults who had never gone to public schools in the U.S., the average amount of adult ESL training reported was
slightly over eight months. Within this adult subpopulation (N = 807), the same regression analyses described above were conducted to provide a baseline against which to assess the impact of adult ESL training. The predictive equation derived for this subset of the original data base was very similar to that derived for the "full" population. With the effects of the variables in this basic equation controlled (AGE, TIMEUS, LAOSPK, LAOLIT, HMONGLIT, EDLAOS), the variable EDUS was added to the equation to assess the impact of formal language training on the overall acquisition process within the Newton community. The EDUS variable significantly enhances to the predictability of English proficiency after the effects of the other variables are held constant (to add EDUS: F = 44.44, p < .001). Once added to this equation, EDUS becomes the third most influential factor in English acquisition (among this subpopulation of Hmong adults), after TIMEUS and LAOSPK.

CONCLUSION

Several different types of factors have been shown to influence second language acquisition. First, the social organization of the native environment influenced the experiences which various individuals bring to the process of acquiring a second language as immigrants. Most salient in this study are phenomena related to sex and age, and probably, contact with outsiders. Within the traditional highlands environment of the Hmong, these factors influenced participation in formal schooling (which, in turn, influenced acquisition of literacy in Lao) and in the wider Lao society generally (which, in turn, influenced acquisition of the spoken Lao language).

Some of these socially organized experiences (going to school, learning a non-native language, becoming literate) apparently have a profound effect on individuals' subsequent acquisition of English in a radically new environment. These formative experiences, ones which later have such
an influence on English acquisition, bring about their effects in a variety of ways. Such formative experiences may bring about cognitive changes in the individual which shape the skills, motivations and strategies that the individual brings to the task of learning English. Whereas previous researchers [e.g., Gardner et al 1974; Krashen 1977] suggest that such factors influence only the formal language learning process, the present results indicate that they affect the acquisition process generally (even for Hmong individuals not participating in ESL programs).

A third type of factor—which is shaped by both of the foregoing types—is only indirectly implicated by present findings. It concerns the characteristics of the contexts in which the Hmong come into contact with native English speakers in the U.S. These contexts include friendships, schools, ESL programs, jobs (for those who work), and so on. Many factors shape the contexts available for learning English: the social structure of the resettled immigrant community; the prevailing social and economic conditions of the host society; and individuals' motivations and social strategies for establishing effective language-learning contacts. The persistence of age as a major negative predictor of English acquisition, even after the effects of many of the other variables correlated with age are controlled, seems especially provocative in this regard and deserving of further research.

NOTES

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1. "Newton" is a pseudonym for an urban center in the western United States.

2. Further reports of this work are available from the author.

3. Interviews were arranged in advance by the interviewers whenever possible. The entire session, including the culturally obligatory greetings and initial conversation, typically lasted one hour.

4. Schooling in each country was reported in number of years attended: "0" was recorded for no schooling at all, "1" for one academic year or part thereof, "2" for a whole or part of a second academic year, etc.

5. All linguistic and literacy proficiencies were rated on a five-point ordinal scale. Details of this scale are fully described later when the topic of measuring English proficiency is taken up.

6. Very recent arrivals and households living far from other Hmong households tend to be slightly underrepresented in this sample.

7. A longer version of this paper is available from the author.

8. Information presented about the Hmong in Southeast Asia has been culled from standard sources such as Geddes 1976; Kunstadder 1967; Lemoine 1972; and Whitaker et al. 1972 and from discussions with Hmong individuals.

9. All but a very few survey items had low missing data rates (typically on the order of 1-2 percent), whereas the question about ownership of a car had a somewhat higher rate (8.4 percent) of missing data. Although interviewers assured
respondents that all information would be confidential, a few respondents may have suppressed information about ownership of a car, fearing this might adversely affect their eligibility for public assistance. Thus the figure of 34 percent may underestimate the percentage of households having a car.

10. Subsequent questions about who in the household had jobs had a relatively high (quite conspicuous among the low overall missing data rates) rate of missing data, nearly 10 percent; as noted for the ownership of cars, there may have been some concern about the impact of reporting jobs on welfare eligibility. (See Note 9.) Nevertheless, 31 percent of the households were reported to have at least one member working.

11. See Note 5.

12. Statistical significance for these and other trends is presented later as part of a multiple linear regression analysis, in which relationships among the many variables surveyed can be ascertained.

13. The survey asked how many years each individual went to school in Laos. Whole numbers of years were reported, so that "0" means no education, "1" means up to 1 year, "2" means more than 1 but not more than 2 years of schooling, and so on. For those individuals presently 12 years of age or older, the average number of years so reported is 1.2.

14. These figures are taken from the actual distribution of proficiencies rather than from Table 7.

15. Despite the care taken in developing, piloting, revising and finally using this proficiency scale, it must be pointed out that the proficiency data collected by this procedure are not entirely satisfactory for analytical purposes. Their validity had to be established, independently, as described later. Objective
tests would be preferable, of course, but no such instrument was suitable for this study.

16. Regardless of the concurrent validity between the proficiency ratings and other data, we must remember that they represent data at an ordinal level, not an interval level. Since the statistical analyses presented later require, in principle, interval data, this must be kept in mind. Experience analyzing these data, however, indicates that the ordinal proficiency ratings may be treated as interval data; in almost every case, the same relationships among variables are identified by statistical procedures which formally require interval measurement as have been identified by corresponding nonparametric procedures requiring only ordinal data.

As a further check, an interval-level proficiency scale was created from the ratings by imposing a binary criterion such that individuals rated at or above the criterion are placed into one group, whereas those rated below that criterion are placed in a second group. The major analyses conducted on these data yield the same outcomes.

17. In conducting these analyses, the following causal ordering among independent variables was assumed (justifiable from other research data): 1) sex, age; 2) proficiency in spoken Lao, written Lao, and written Hmong; and 3) time in the United States and education in the United States (including adult ESL training). Variables at a lower level in this order could conceivably influence variables at any higher level, but not vice-versa. For example, an individual's age or sex could conceivably influence his subsequent experiences (e.g., learning Lao, going to school in Laos) but not vice-versa; an individual's education could not conceivably influence his or her age or sex. No restrictive assumptions were made concerning relationships between variables at the same level in the ordering. Under these assumptions, the regression analyses are quite straightforward and readily interpretable.
WORKS CONSULTED


Robson, B. (this volume) Hmong literacy, formal education and their effects on performance in an ESL class.


Thao, C. (this volume) Hmong migration and leadership in Laos and in the United States.


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PART FIVE

THE HMONG IN AMERICA: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS
SUDDEN ADULT DEATH IN ASIAN POPULATIONS:
THE CASE OF THE HMONG*

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Of the many problems associated with the migration and resettlement of the Hmong, none have captured the attention and imagination of the media as much as the topic of sudden unexplained deaths. It is unfortunate that, for many Americans, the only knowledge available on the Hmong is from newspaper or magazine reports of mysterious deaths. This paper examines the nature and incidence of the Hmong sudden deaths, and examines the process of searching for explanations for this phenomenon.

Deaths that are classified as "sudden" in the United States may be variously defined. Usually "sudden death" means that the interval between the onset of symptoms and the death is less than twenty-four hours (Oalmann et al 1980). This definition is certainly sufficient to include all of the Hmong cases. Of the twenty documented cases in the United States, only one is female. The male victims are usually described as "young" with the ages ranging from twenty-one to sixty-two.

Interviews have been conducted with Hmong in the state of Washington on the topic of sudden unexplained deaths. In these interviews, there were no reports of such deaths occurring in the highlands of Laos. Several eyewitness accounts of sudden unexplained nighttime deaths in the lowlands of Laos and in the refugee camps of Thailand were obtained. The victims were described by these Hmong informants as making characteristic moaning, choking, or snoring sounds at the time of death. In fact, it was stated by one informant, commenting on a sudden death observed in Laos, that when a wife hears these sounds, she immediately knows that her
husband is going to die. Other Hmong, however, were not familiar with this pattern of death, and it is unknown just how widely this syndrome is recognized by the Hmong. I have not been aware of a Hmong term for these deaths. Several Hmong have told me that "we do not have a word, we just say 'die while sleeping, no reason.'" The lack of a specific term does not mean that the Hmong were unaware of sudden deaths before hearing about recent newspaper reports. Similar situations exist in the United States today. For example, the nausea associated with pregnancy is often called "morning sickness." Morning sickness is certainly a well known phenomenon, but the phrase is no more specific than to say "die while sleeping, no reason."

Autopsies have been performed on all of the Hmong cases. While various ailments have been documented individually, there has been no consistent finding of any pathological condition associated with these deaths. Toxicological investigations, conducted in eight of the cases, have been negative (Dr. Roy Baron, Centers for Disease Control, Atlanta, Georgia, personal communication).

The Hmong sudden deaths show a striking similarity to a sudden death syndrome called bangungut in Filipino males. In cases of bangungut, previously healthy males are said to die during the night making moaning, snoring, or choking noises (Aponte 1960). In figure 1, the time of death of forty-five cases of bangungut in Filipino males living in Hawaii is compared to the seventeen male Hmong cases in which data are available on the time of death. The published report of bangungut cases was the result of a search of autopsy records in Oahu county from 1937 to 1948 (Majoska 1948). Information of the time of death of the Hmong cases was provided by the Centers for Disease Control, Atlanta, Georgia. In both samples, the deaths are associated with sleep, and the greatest number fall between one and five a.m. It is interesting to note that there is one Filipino death that occurred around 12:00 noon. This man happened to be a guard who worked at night and slept during the day. His death did occur while sleeping. Excluding this one daytime case, the mean time of
FIGURE 1. TIME OF DEATH

FILIPINO

"bangungut"

% of total cases

PM
AM
PM

HMONG

% of total cases

PM
AM
PM

6 7 8 9 10 11 12 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 1 2 3 4 5 6
death is 2:00 a.m. for the Filipino sample (SD = 2.3 hrs) and the mean time of death for the Hmong cases is 3:00 a.m. (SD = 2.0 hrs). These means are not significantly different.

The ages of the Filipino victims follow a distribution that is similar to the Hmong cases. The range is from twenty to sixty, with the greatest number falling between thirty and forty years of age. There is the possibility that the age distribution of the cases is merely an artifact of the age distribution of the population. Often in migrant groups there is a large proportion of young males in the founding population. To control for the effect of age, I have calculated age-specific death rates for each population, which is presented in figure 2. The rates are calculated for ten year age intervals, and plotted at the midpoint of each interval. The number of cases used for the numerator in the rate calculation for the Filipinos came from the paper reporting on the cases in Hawai'i (Majoska 1948). The Centers for Disease Control provided the information on the ages of the Hmong victims.

The Filipino population at risk was estimated from the rather detailed demographic data that are available on migrant populations in Hawai'i. Only cases that occurred in Honolulu were considered, because the process of case identification and the demographic data are thought to be more reliable there than in rural Oahu.

The Hmong population at risk was estimated by using the age and sex distribution of a West Coast sample of nearly 2,500 Hmong (Steve Reder, Northwest Educational Laboratories, personal communication). The age and sex distribution was applied to the total Hmong population size in the United States from 1977 to 1981. In order to generalize over a period of time in which the population size was rapidly growing, the rates for both the Filipino and Hmong populations were calculated on the basis of accumulated person years. The number of accumulated person years is equivalent to the area under the population curve.
FIGURE 2. AGE SPECIFIC RATES OF SUDDEN UNEXPLAINED DEATHS

HMONG 1977 - 1981

FILIPINO 1937 - 1948

CASES per 1,000 MALES per YEAR

AGE
Although the sample size is very small, an interesting pattern does emerge. The Hmong and Filipino death rates rise dramatically to a peak in the twenty-five to thirty-five year old group, continue to remain elevated in the thirty-five to forty-five year old group, and then decline with increasing age. It is not clear at this time whether or not these death rates are stable over time in these populations, or if they are subject to short term fluctuations due to changing environmental and social conditions.

I would like to stress the importance of the age distribution of death rates. In an entirely different syndrome, that of Sudden Infant Death, one of the most consistent and characteristic features seen in different populations is the age distribution of the rates (Peterson 1980). It is likely that the sudden adult deaths in the Hmong and Filipino populations are part of a syndrome with a unique age distribution. It is difficult to explain the differences in the magnitude of the rates at this time. On one hand, the differences could be an artifact, based on differences in the effectiveness of the surveillance systems. On the other hand, the rate differences may reflect environmental or social differences between the two populations.

There are reports of sudden unexplained nighttime deaths occurring in other Asian populations. There are, however, no data at this time with which to evaluate rates or time of death. Sudden nighttime deaths have been noted among Japanese living in Japan (Gotoh 1976), Japanese and Chinese living in Hawaii (Nolasco 1957; Manalang 1948), Montagnard tribesmen who moved from the highlands to the lowlands of Vietnam (Sullivan 1981) and among ethnic Lao, Mien, and Cambodians living in the United States (Dr. Roy Baron, personal communication).

The patterns of age-specific rates shown in figure 2 are very different from the overall pattern of sudden cardiac deaths in the United States, several European countries, and the Soviet Union. In these industrialized regions, the sudden cardiac death rates increase dramatically with age, rather than showing a unimodal
distribution (Romo and Ruostenoja 1978; Vikhert et al 1977). Sudden cardiac deaths are of interest here for several reasons. First, sudden unexplained deaths are often classified as cardiac deaths in the United States. Second, often in confirmed cases of sudden cardiac death, such as those with observed ventricular fibrillation, there is no evidence of coronary artery disease. The Hmong and Filipino deaths are consistent with death due to cardiac arrhythmia, and are not associated with coronary artery disease (Minnesota Department of Health, 1981). In the only known case of a Hmong survivor of a nighttime disturbance, the individual was found to be in ventricular fibrillation and had no evidence of coronary artery disease (Dr. Brian Gross, Department of Cardiology, Harborview Hospital, Seattle, WA, personal communication).

The category of sudden cardiac deaths in western nations is probably a lumping together of diseases with different etiologies. A problem in investigating such deaths is the likelihood that several different pathways may result in the common endpoint of sudden death. Even when a proximate cause of death is observed, such as ventricular fibrillation, a wide range of factors could have initiated an arrhythmia, or made the victim more susceptible to the effects of arrhythmia.

It has been proposed that one component of sudden cardiac deaths in the United States is a so-called "early death component" with a peak in incidence in the twenty-five to thirty-five year old group (Burch 1980). The "early death component" of sudden cardiac deaths in the United States is thought to be swamped by mortality due to arteriosclerotic disease, which increases in incidence with increasing age. The Hmong and Filipino populations may be a useful model for studying the "early death component" of sudden cardiac death without the modifying effects of other types of chronic disease.

The search for an explanation for the Hmong and Filipino deaths, however, has taken a turn away from the available data and existing medical models, and has moved toward rampant speculation. Another similarity that exists between the Hmong and Filipino deaths is
the sensational representation that they have received in the popular, and even scientific press.

An article appearing in a 1955 edition to the Saturday Evening Post, written by a prominent physician from Hawaii, was one of the first reports of bangungut to appear in the United States. Bangungut is a combination of Tagalog words which literally mean "to rise up" and "to moan." In this magazine article, the author uses the liberal translation, nightmare, and asserts that "men dream themselves to death" (Larsen 1955: 140). The bodily movements and agonal utterances of the dying victim were thought by the author to be caused by a nightmare, rather than being the effects of respiratory or cardiac arrest. The notion of "nightmare death" captured the imagination of the media and made its way into the scientific literature. There is no evidence, however, that the Filipino victims were haunted by nightmares before their death. Because of the similarities of the Hmong sudden deaths with bangungut, and the continued fascination of the press with exotic explanations for sudden deaths in foreign populations, the "nightmare fright" hypothesis has been invoked once again.

Another popular hypothesis concerning the Hmong deaths is that they are due to prior exposure to chemical warfare in Laos. It has been claimed that there is a lingering biological effect of chemical exposure in Laos which predisposes some individuals to sudden death at a later time. It is a fact that chemicals were used in Laos with which scientists in the United States are not familiar. One might speculate that these could have weakened certain individuals, predisposing them to sudden death at a later time. The United States State Department released a report in mid-September 1981 which said that physical evidence had been found that a group of potent mycotoxins known as trichothecenes had been used in chemical warfare in Laos (Seib 1981). The strongest argument against the hypothesis that chemical warfare may be a cause of the sudden deaths observed in the United States is the fact that cases of sudden death are known to have occurred in Laos before the gassing began, and sudden deaths have occurred in in-
individuals who left Laos before the gas attacks began. This information has been obtained from interviews with Hmong in Washington state, and from Dr. Larry Judy's work in the state of Minnesota (Dr. Larry Judy, Minnesota Department of Health, personal communication).

A third sensational hypothesis concerning the sudden deaths of Hmong was put forth in the pages of Science magazine proposing that the Hmong have developed a congenital weakness of the autonomic nervous system that causes cardiac arrhythmia (Marshall 1981). The speculation was made that the congenital weakness developed as a result of inbreeding. This proposal fits into a pattern that is becoming familiar: when unexplained phenomena occur in unfamiliar ethnic groups, exotic explanations are offered that serve to maintain existing stereotypes. The claim of inbreeding as a population phenomenon is unfounded, and insulting to the Hmong people.

Ethnographic reports on fieldwork with the Hmong in Thailand during the 1930s (Bernatzik 1970), and in Laos through the 1960s (Barney 1967; Lemoine 1972) provide no evidence of inbreeding. In a report on the Hmong of northern Thailand, Bernatzik noted that the incest taboo is observed very strictly. Apparently, first cousin marriages to the mother's clan are acceptable (Kao Vang, personal communication). The occasional occurrence of first cousin marriages, however, is certainly not strong evidence for the elevation of the coefficient of inbreeding for the total population. A second observation, provided by Dr. Larry Judy (personal communication) is that there does not appear to be a clustering of deaths among relatives. Even if there was a clustering of deaths among relatives, this does not mean that inbreeding is the most likely explanation. People in the same family or clan are likely to have lived under similar conditions, leaving the possibility of an environmental factor as the causal agent. A third weakness of the inbreeding claim is that it would have to be invoked in the Filipino situation, in which there is presently no support.
The lack of evidence for inbreeding does not, of course, preclude the possibility that familial factors may be implicated in sudden deaths of the Hmong. It is interesting to note that while obvious familial factors are involved in the development of cardiovascular disease in the United States, inbreeding has not been invoked as an explanation (Munger and Hurlich 1981).

In summary, there is no evidence to support the claims that the Hmong sudden deaths are due to nightmare fright, chemical exposure, or congenital effects due to inbreeding. The Hmong deaths under study are indeed unexplained at this time, but they are by no means unique. It is clear now that quick medical attention may save the life of an individual experiencing a sleep disturbance. A top priority for community leaders, sponsors, and English language teachers should be instruction for refugees in the utilization of emergency services.

On the basis of the circumstances surrounding the deaths, the times of occurrence, and distribution of the rates by age, I feel that the Hmong deaths and the Filipino cases of bangungut have a similar biological basis. The Hmong and Filipino deaths differ from sudden cardiac deaths in the United States in their pattern of age specific death rates. This apparent difference may be the result of the misclassification of diseases of differing etiologies in the United States. The possibility of an "early sudden death component" in the industrialized nations needs to be investigated further. Once the differences in the pattern of death rates by age are accounted for, the question of differences in magnitude of the rates needs to be addressed.

The most promising area of research concerning the Hmong and Filipino sudden deaths is the broad group of disorders of respiration during sleep known as the sleep apnea syndromes. One syndrome, known as obstructive sleep apnea, is characterized by upper airway obstruction during sleep. Obstructive sleep apnea is much more prevalent in males than in females, can give rise to fatal cardiac arrhythmias, and can be associated with snoring or be asymptomatic (Block et al 1979;
Cherniack 1981). The cause or causes of obstructive sleep apnea are not clear, and it is probably a diverse group of disorders with many pathways leading to the common endpoint of airway obstruction during sleep. A consideration of the Hmong deaths within the context of existing disease models, and within the context of Hmong culture and migration history will probably be the most rewarding approach in trying to understand the etiology of sudden nighttime deaths.

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RURAL HMONG POPULATIONS IN WESTERN WASHINGTON STATE: THE CONSEQUENCES OF MIGRATION FOR NUTRITIONAL STATUS AND GROWTH*

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INTRODUCTION

The state of Washington is reported to have the third largest number of Southeast Asian refugees of any state. Of the over 500,000 refugees in the U.S., over 24,000 are reported to be in the state (ORR August 1981). Unofficially, all indications are that the actual number may be as much as 20-25 percent higher due to secondary migration of refugees from other states. Approximately 1200-1400 of these people are Hmong, from the mountains and from lowland areas in northern and eastern Laos. By the end of April 1981, twenty-nine Hmong households numbering 220 people lived in seven communities in the area east of Lake Washington, within approximately thirty miles of Seattle (see Map 1; Figure 1). This report presents information gathered by working with individuals in these twenty-nine households.

We have been concerned, first, with understanding what happens to a people's diet when they migrate from Southeast Asia to the U.S. Consequently, we have interviewed men and women from these Hmong families about their dietary histories, their migration to the U.S., and their changes in diet since their arrival. This report highlights the major aspects of dietary changes for this population as a result of their experiences as refugees and migrants to the U.S. From data compiled about shifts in dietary practices, we apply simple methods for assessing the adequacy of diets in terms of the intake of major nutrients.

Second, we have attempted to determine what are some of the biological consequences which result from changes in diet as refugees move from Laos to the U.S. For example, we may expect that if diets change in the
direction of "normal" American diets, there will be over time differences in the way that Hmong children grow in the U.S. as compared to the way they grew in Laos, an observation which has been made for other Asian groups who have migrated to North America (Eveleth and Tanner 1976). Thus, this report also presents data compiled during the first stages of our longitudinal study of child growth and development among Hmong people in the U.S.

THE POPULATION

The population studied here, the Hmong, is an ethnic group for whom little literature exists about their traditional diets in northern and eastern highland areas of Laos (Bernatzik 1970; Cuisinier 1948; Lemoine 1972; Keen 1978). General impressions which these sources give, however, have been confirmed by discussions about traditional dietary patterns with the Hmong families surveyed. Before the 1960s most Laotian Hmong villages were located between 3000 and 6000 feet in elevation. Swidden agriculture was routine, with new planting areas cleared every three to four years. Dry-rice farming provided the dietary staple, but "eating rice" also assumes one is eating some vegetables and greens as well, grown in gardens. Although all vegetables in the highlands were available only seasonally, the most common were cabbage, several types of beans, peppers, onions, and several varieties of sweet potato. Following World War II, the highland diet began to be increasingly supplemented by occasional imports from lowland towns with items such as bananas, pineapple, papaya, and sweetened condensed milk. Most highland families ate chicken only two or three times per month and, more rarely, pigs. Once or twice a year buffalo meat was eaten, and only occasionally were fish eaten in the highlands. All domestic foods were supplemented by food from the forest. Most Hmong boys and men hunted, boys for birds and small amphibians, men for these and feral pigs, deer, monkeys, and others. In all, meat from the forest was eaten about three to six time per month, but some Hmong families now in Washington report eating meat once a month or less in pre-1960s Laos.
The diet of the highlands, however, was not without its problems. Many years saw the rice run out in the period just before the rice planting until the new crop reached maturity, often during the months of June, July, and August. Often, the rice stores became exhausted due to infestations of rodents. During this time maize became the dietary staple, but many people interviewed said they did not feel as strong when eating maize, and that it was hard to eat enough of it to feel satisfied at a meal.

It is unclear how serious the "seasonal hunger" was in Laos, what consequences it had for protein and energy intakes, and how it affected growth patterns of children, if it did so at all. Data from studies of childhood growth patterns do indicate that in some tropical environments, growth curves are directly affected by a combination of seasonal periods of food shortage and the risk of contracting an infectious disease (Thomson 1977).

Of the twenty-nine Hmong families we have so far interviewed about biographical and socioeconomic matters, some had begun to move from highland to lowland villages by the late 1950s in order to escape from the developing warfare in the mountains. Consequently, diets shifted slightly as a result of moving to lowland regions. Meat consumption became more regular, canned sweetened condensed milk was used more frequently, some fruits and vegetables not available in the highlands were more often eaten.

Perhaps a major difference experienced in the lowlands was that the time of "seasonal hunger" did not occur in the lowland towns, because foods, especially rice, were more regularly available.

For some families, however, the time between the late 1950s and the middle 1970s was a period of constant movement, of dependence on food supplied by U.S. Armed Forces, and of greater reliance on foods collected and hunted from forested areas.
Starting in May 1975, and continuing to the present, many thousands of Hmong have been escaping from Laos to the refugee camps located to the west in Thailand and to the north in the People's Republic of China. We have attempted to reconstruct their diets for the time spent in refugee camps. Our impressions agree with what has been reported elsewhere (Olness and Torjesen 1980) about camp conditions. For the first few years after they were established, most calories available were in the form of unenriched rice with fish sauce or soy sauce for seasoning. Food was monotonous and inadequate in iron, calcium, iodine, proteins, fats (Erickson and Hoang 1980). More recently, diets in the refugee camps have improved, become more varied, and now include fresh fruit, vegetables, and more milk. Moreover, some families were able to forage in the surrounding forested areas, and some obtained foods from black market sources.

Many Hmong from these refugee camps have elected to come to the U.S., and after an average stay of nearly three years in the refugee camps at least 45,000 have thus far done so (Marshall 1981). Large-ly as a result of these migrations, their dietary practices have been exposed to considerable forces encouraging or demanding change.

METHODS: DIETARY SURVEY

Data used in this study were obtained from interviews with 39 Hmong individuals now living in western Washington state in rural towns within 30 miles of Seattle (Map 1). All interviews were conducted with the assistance of a Hmong interpreter, were conducted in the Hmong language, and took place in the subject's home. Two months were spent in preliminary and introductory discussions with Hmong people about their patterns of food use. The information obtained was used to construct a structured questionnaire, including a list of 109 foods commonly eaten by Hmong in Laos, Thailand, and the U.S. Interviews normally lasted three hours, and dealt with the individual's biographical background, genealogical relationships, food preferences, where specific foods were first eaten, 24-hour dietary recalls, frequency of consumption of specific foods, average daily pattern of food consump-
tion (time of day, where, with whom, etc.), and socio-economic data about the family and household both in Laos and in the U.S. Foods included in the food frequency list constitute the data analyzed here.

Table 1. Age distribution of Hmong sample and length of residence in the U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age Ranges (years)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>21-39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males (#)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range:</td>
<td>15-66 years; Mean age = 35.5 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females (#)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range:</td>
<td>15-70 years; Mean age = 36.4 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Length of time in the U.S. (# years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0-1</th>
<th>1-2</th>
<th>2-3</th>
<th>3-4</th>
<th>4-5</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 presents age-distribution data for our sample, and their length of residence in the U.S. Twenty-two subjects are males, 17 are females; mean age is 35.7 years; mean length of residence in the U.S. at the time of interview (between January and June, 1981) is 1.5 years.

A simplified method for assessing diets has been presented by Guthrie and Scheer (1981), in which points are assigned for each serving of food eaten daily from the basic four food groups (see Table 2). Two points are assigned for each serving from the milk and milk products group, two for the meat and meat alternative group, and one each for foods from the fruit and vegetables group and from the bread and cereals groups. This scoring method is based on daily servings of foods, and therefore data indicating
frequencies for food intakes can be used for this analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food group</th>
<th>Points per serving</th>
<th>Possible food group score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milk and milk products (up to a maximum of 2)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat and meat alternatives* (up to a maximum of 2)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit and vegetables (up to a maximum of 4)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread and cereals† (up to a maximum of 4)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total dietary score</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes animal protein foods, legumes, and nuts.
†Includes enriched and whole grains.

A pilot study of this method (Guthrie and Scheer 1981) has shown that it produces a statistically reliable means for assessing dietary adequacy, at least for the population originally studied. Individuals with higher total dietary scores had nutrient intakes closer to 100 percent of the 1974 RDA (corrected for age and sex) for 12 nutrients selected for analysis, and the relationship is a nearly linear one (see Figure 1, in Guthrie and Scheer 1981). Further, it was demonstrated that each of the four food groups makes a relatively unique contribution to nutritional adequacy.

As a result of the high level of validity for this method as thus far demonstrated, it seems reasonable to test its applicability by study of a population for which there is reason to believe that some deficiencies exist in nutrient intake (Hurlich and Munger 1981; Casey and Harrill 1977; Peck, et al. 1981). As Guthrie and Scheer note: "If the dietary score is
to be used as a proxy for a complete nutrient analysis, it must be sensitive in identifying individuals at risk" (1981: 243).

At the same time a note of caution is warranted. While the method of dietary analysis used here is probably suitable for American diets, it may be less suitable for qualitative analysis of groups with vastly different food habits. Consequently, research now underway is attempting to determine the applicability of the four food groups to the Hmong diet, and to develop a more suitable grouping of foods which both reflects Hmong conceptions of food classification and laboratory results of nutrient composition. In the meantime, we employ the method described here.

TABLE 3. Specific Food Items on Food Frequency Questionnaire Assigned to Basic Four Food Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Group:</th>
<th>Milk and Meat and Fruit and Vegetables</th>
<th>Bread and Cereals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milk Products</td>
<td>Milk Meat Alternatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. yogurt 6. chicken 21. peas</td>
<td>39. breakfast fast cereal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. cottage cheese salted meats 22. beans</td>
<td>40. cooked cabbage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. solid cheese 8. pork 9. ham 23. potato, french fries 24. cabbage</td>
<td>41. pancake, waffle cereal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ice cream 10. liver 11. steak, beef 25. lettuce 26. mustard greens</td>
<td>42. rice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. milk 12. hot dogs 13. hamburger 14. sausage 15. bacon 16. luncheon meats potato</td>
<td>43. macaroni, noodle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. organ meats 18. fish 19. eggs 20. peanut butter, nuts 31. pepper (hot) 32. pepper (sweet) 33. tomato 34. orange 35. apple 36. grape 37. strawberry 38. cantaloupe</td>
<td>44. bread</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the list of 109 foods, 44 were found to be eaten frequently by this group in the U.S., and in fact represent a large majority of the foods ever eaten in the U.S. by this population (see Table 3). These 44 foods are analyzed by the food scoring method described above, while several additional items are included on the food frequency table (Table 4). Food frequency data, representing the frequency with which specific foods are eaten on an average weekly basis, are converted into food group scores (see Table 2) by the following procedure: (A) All food frequency data are converted to frequency of consumption on a per-week basis (Table 4). Foods in Table 4 are grouped into the basic four food groups as listed in Table 3. (B) The average number of times per week that foods in a basic four food group are consumed is calculated by adding the frequency of consumption of individual foods in that category. For example, the frequency of consumption of individual types of meats are added to produce an overall frequency of consumption for meat in the meat and meat alternative group. (C) The overall frequency of consumption for each food group per week is then divided by seven to produce an "average" daily consumption pattern, based on the food frequency data. (D) Daily averages are then used to compute the possible food group score. For example, if, for a male 15 years of age, the average frequency of consumption of items from the meat and meat alternatives group is 17.0 times per week, then the average daily consumption is 2.4 times, yielding a dietary score of four for that food group (see Guthrie and Scheer 1981).

Table 4 contains items which contributed significantly to nutrient intake. An internal check in the questionnaire allowed us to verify some of these results. Subjects were asked how frequently they ate meats of several individual varieties. They were later asked how often they ate meat of any type. As seen in Table 4, we find remarkably good agreement between calculations of average frequency of consumption from both sources.

We evaluate the total dietary scores and scores by basic food group by using data published in the
TABLE 4: Food frequencies of 39 Laotian Hmong (Southeast Asian refugees) based on mean weekly food frequencies. January - May, 1981. Eastern King County, Washington State.

<p>| Age (years) | Males | | Females | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>15-20</th>
<th>21-39</th>
<th>40+</th>
<th></th>
<th>15-20</th>
<th>21-39</th>
<th>40+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yogurt</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottage cheese</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard cheese</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice cream (real)</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk (8 oz. glasses)</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total mean frequency</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meat and meat alternatives group:</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork, ham, salted meats</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liver</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef, steak</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sausage, bacon</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meats (all types)$^c$</td>
<td>(17.0)</td>
<td>(19.1)</td>
<td>(17.0)</td>
<td>(18.3)</td>
<td>(14.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$ Food groupings and food item numbers are according to groupings and numbers in Table 3.

$^b$ Mainly 2% (low fat) milk, used in 65% of households.

$^c$ These averages result from asking informants for their own estimates of their frequency of meat consumption of any type of meat. It is not derived by summing individual frequencies of meats consumed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>21-39</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>21-39</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. fish</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. eggs</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. peanut butter, nuts</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total mean frequency:</strong></td>
<td><strong>25.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>24.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>22.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>24.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>22.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>22.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>26.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>23.8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fruit and vegetables group:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>15-20</th>
<th>21-39</th>
<th>40+</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>15-20</th>
<th>21-39</th>
<th>40+</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21,22. dried beans, peas</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. potato, french fries</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-33. cooked vegetables</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25,33. raw vegetables</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34-38. fruit</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total mean frequency:</strong></td>
<td><strong>14.1</strong></td>
<td><strong>20.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>19.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>19.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>14.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>20.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>22.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>20.8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bread and cereals group:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>15-20</th>
<th>21-39</th>
<th>40+</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>15-20</th>
<th>21-39</th>
<th>40+</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39,40. cereals</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. pancake, waffle</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. rice</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. macaroni, noodle</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. bread (^d) (θ pieces)</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total mean frequency:</strong></td>
<td><strong>39.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>34.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>26.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>32.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>34.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>32.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>32.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>32.9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^d\) Mainly white, enriched.
Table 4: Continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>21-39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other items:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. soy sauce</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. fish sauce</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. beer, wine, spirits&lt;sup&gt;e&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. fruit juice&lt;sup&gt;f&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. sweets&lt;sup&gt;g&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. butter</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of meals per week:&lt;sup&gt;h&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>e</sup> Includes vodka, rum, gin, whisky, scotch.
<sup>f</sup> Mainly orange and apple juice.
<sup>g</sup> Includes sweet rolls, donuts, cookies, pie, cake, candy.
<sup>h</sup> "Number of meals" is obtained from daily eating schedules, which showed that snacking is rare among this population.
original report of this method (Guthrie and Scheer 1981). The food frequency data used here are calculated differently than are the data used in the original report because these data are based on the frequency of consumption which more accurately measures average daily patterns of nutrient consumption.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: DIETARY SURVEY

Dietary Changes

Since arriving in the U.S. the Hmong refugees interviewed reported that their diets have undergone changes because some items familiar in Laos are not available here, and many new items locally available have subsequently entered their diets. Of the 109 items used to determine change in patterns of food use and food preference between Laos and the U.S., 19 items more commonly used in the U.S. had been eaten by at least half the refugees, and mainly in the U.S. for the first time (Table 5).

Foods most likely eaten for the first time in the U.S. and most liked on this "new foods" list include apples, fruit juice, strawberries, frozen fruit, frozen vegetables, peanut butter, hamburger, grapes, and bread.

Table 4 lists the frequency with which 50 kinds and categories of foods are usually eaten by this group on a weekly basis, divided by age and sex. Men are, on the average, more frequently eating chicken, pork, and, to some extent, all types of meat, than are women. Women more frequently eat eggs, peanut butter and nuts, and fruit, and drink more milk. In particular, women eat all types of sweets, including sweet rolls, donuts, cookies, pies, cakes, candy, more frequently than do men.

We attempted to determine if the distribution of food frequencies is predicted by length of residence in the U.S., length of stay in a Thai refugee camp, or household size. None of these factors seem related to any of the food frequency data, results which may
Table 5. Food preferences of Laotian Hmong, arranged by order of those items most likely eaten for the first time in the U.S.\(^a\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>where first eaten</th>
<th>like-dislike (^b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>never</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. apples</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. hamburger</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. fruit juice</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. peanut butter</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. strawberries</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. canned fruit</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. frozen fruit</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. frozen veggies</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. grapes</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. dry cereal</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. bread</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. cake, pie</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. celery</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. asparagus</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. carrots</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. pancake</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. ketchup</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. hard cheese</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. pizza</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) N=39, 22 males and 17 females. Numbers represent percentage of total sample.
\(^b\) Based on those who have "ever eaten" the food item, only.
\(^c\) Refugee camps in Thailand.

be due to our small sample size. Our data do suggest that males who are employed frequently eat peanut butter, bread, and drink milk more than do unemployed males, while the latter group more often eat rice and sweets.

There are, for this group, differences by sex but especially by age in the proportion of the 50-item food list that are regularly eaten (see Table 6). There is a consistent tendency for females to have eaten a wider variety of foods on the list than males, within each age group. More striking are the differ-
Table 6. Percentage of 50 items from Table 4 ever or regularly eaten in the U.S. by Hmong sample. (50 items on list.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sex</th>
<th>age range (number)</th>
<th>percentage of items ever eaten. mean (range)</th>
<th>percentage of items eaten 2+ times per month. mean (range)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>males:</td>
<td>15-20 years. (N = 4)</td>
<td>59.2% (50.0-70.0%)</td>
<td>57.1% (46.0-68.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21-39 years. (N = 12)</td>
<td>64.6% (46.0-80.0%)</td>
<td>57.0% (38.0-76.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40+ years. (N = 6)</td>
<td>58.1% (48.0-70.0%)</td>
<td>44.6% (42.0-48.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>females:</td>
<td>15-20 years. (N = 5)</td>
<td>67.0% (66.0-70.0%)</td>
<td>62.1% (58.0-64.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21-39 years. (N = 7)</td>
<td>62.3% (46.0-70.0%)</td>
<td>57.6% (46.0-68.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40+ years. (N = 5)</td>
<td>69.3% (54.0-70.0%)</td>
<td>55.2% (48.0-82.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ences by age within sexes. For items regularly eat two or more times per month, younger males and females between 15-20 years of age regularly eat a wider variety of items than do people over 40 years of age. Note especially that the six males 40 years and older regularly use only 44.6 percent of the 50 items, and women 40 years and older use regularly 55.2 percent of the items. This difference between older women and men is mainly due to women eating a wider variety of sweet carbohydrate foods and drinking a larger variety of fruit juices.

There are, unfortunately, no data available which allow comparison of diet breadth by age and sex for Hmong populations in Laos and the U.S. We suspect, however, that the observation of a smaller variety of foods consumed by older Hmong individuals in this study would not be seen to the same degree in Laos, due to the fact that older Hmong individuals in highland Laotian communities reside and eat with their
families (Bernatzik 1970; Lemoine 1972). At the same time, it has been observed in many studies (O'Hanlon and Kohrs 1978) that older Americans both eat a smaller variety of foods and have a lower consumption of calories than do younger Americans. However, although the trends are in the same direction, the differences in the variety of foods consumed are not nearly as great for American populations (CHEW 1979) as are reported here for the Hmong. The conservative patterns in diets of older individuals in this study are consistent with other observations of there being little variation over time in intake from various food groups for a U.S. elderly population re-studied after a period of 14 years (Steinkamp, Cohen and Walsh 1965).

Thus, the attempted maintenance of traditional dietary patterns (and see later) by the elderly Hmong in this sample, and the resultant restricted variety of foods consumed, may be the most significant observation of this portion of the study.

**Dietary Assessment**

Using the method described earlier, we have calculated dietary scores for each food group for each individual. Figure 2 shows the contribution to total dietary scores for each basic food group by age and sex. When considered by sex alone (Figure 2A) males and females show a similar pattern of consumption from all four food groups, with foods from the milk and milk alternatives group eaten least frequently. None of the differences by sex are statistically significant.

Comparisons by age within each sex are limited by small sample sizes, particularly for the youngest age group (see Figure 2B, C). There appears to be an age effect, however, for consumption in the milk group (older individuals consume less). Grouped data (Table 7) indicates that the most significant difference by age is for the frequency of food consumption in the milk and milk alternative group, with individuals in the 40 years and older category retaining
FIGURE 2: Contribution to total dietary score by each of the Basic Four Food Groups, by age and sex.

A: FOOD GROUP SCORE—BY SEX

Milk  Meat  F/V  B/C

A:  Females
    Males

B, C:  FOOD GROUP SCORES—MALES BY AGE

15–20 years
21–39 years
40+ years

C: FOOD GROUP SCORES—FEMALES BY AGE
Table 7. Contribution to total dietary score by each Basic Food Group. Grouped data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample:</th>
<th>N(^a):</th>
<th>Food group:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total Food Group Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>Meats</td>
<td>Fruit, vegs.</td>
<td>Bread, cer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-39 yrs. (males + females)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2.1(^b)</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40+ yrs. (males + females)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>males: 15-39 yrs.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.9(^b)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40+ yrs.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>females: 15-39 yrs.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.3(^b)</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40+ yrs.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) N = sample size in each group.

\(^b\) Differences between scores by age within each food group significant at p < 0.05 (t-test).
traditional patterns of milk consumption, while younger persons are more frequently consuming milk and milk products.

There is a second trend, but not a statistically significant one, in which older individuals eat foods from the fruit and vegetable category, especially with rice, in a manner which follows traditional dietary patterns (Bernatzik 1970; Lemoine 1972). Finally, the total scores tend to be consistently lower for the older individuals in our sample.

One of 17 females scored a total dietary score of 1 or lower, while eight of 22 men scored 10 or less (Table 8). Five of these men are aged 40 years and above. Thus, it is mainly older men who have low dietary scores in this group. With dietary scores of 10 or less, Guthrie and Scheer (1981) found that 50 percent or more of their test sample of 212 individuals fall below two-thirds of the recommended daily allowance (RDA) for the following nutrients: magnesium, zinc, iron, vitamin A, thiamin, vitamin B₆. With total dietary scores of nine or less, only 50 percent of their sample had two-thirds of the RDA for calcium.

Table 8. Distribution of Dietary Scores by Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dietary Score (total of all four basic food groups)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>males</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>females</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total dietary score is not equally sensitive for indicating adequacy of intake for all nutrients. Guthrie and Scheer (1981) note that only two-thirds of their subjects with total dietary scores of 16 met the RDA for iron. Older males in the Hmong population
surveyed here, due to their high frequency of meat consumption, may be less deficient in zinc, thiamin, and vitamin B₆ (Kohrs et al. 1978) than is suggested by their total dietary scores. Thus, it is most likely that for the age and sex distribution as represented by this sample, older men are likely to suffer from dietary deficiencies in magnesium, iron, and vitamin A. Calcium requirements may actually be higher in the U.S. than they were for this population when in Laos, due to the more frequent consumption of animal proteins in the U.S.

There are, however, other dietary practices which do not show up well in the types of statistics thus far presented, but which may strongly influence nutrient adequacy. For example, many of the women interviewed reported a general avoidance of meat, especially of pork, following the birth of a child. Some reported a decreased meat consumption during the last trimester of pregnancy. These practices may influence both the late pre-natal growth of the fetus, and the mother's weight-change following pregnancy. Also, more and more Hmong women are bottle-feeding their babies, and seem to be encouraged on the whole to do so by their female sponsors and some physicians. Older people especially eat vegetables by boiling them for fairly long periods and then drinking the water during a meal, often not eating the vegetables themselves at all, thereby influencing the nutritional quality of the vegetables.

Finally, many women from American families sponsoring refugees have taught cooking to Hmong women shortly after the refugee family arrives. Most frequently, in our experience, Hmong women are taught how to cook pies, cakes, cookies, pancakes, and occasionally bread. Of these items, cakes and pancakes are most likely to remain in the Hmong women's diet.

In summary, these data indicate the nature of dietary changes being experienced by a population of Hmong refugees. They point out, as well, that associated with the process of dietary change is the like-
lihood that certain age and sex groups may receive inadequate nutrient intakes. Older people, in particular, are vulnerable to dietary insults and their needs must be addressed through programs aimed at providing them and their families with appropriate nutritional education and assistance.

METHODS: GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Over 100 individuals in this Hmong community have been measured anthropometrically, using standard techniques for measuring stature (anthropometer, no shoes); recumbent length (non-variable plastic tape); weight (spring scale calibrated for each use); head and mid-upper arm circumference (non-variable plastic tape); triceps, subscapular, and chest skinfold thicknesses (Lange skinfold caliper); nose breadth and height (sliding caliper) (Weiner and Lourie 1969). Many of these measurements were selected to provide comparison with published growth data from U.S. and other Asian populations (NCHS, 1975; ICNND, Vietnam 1960; ICNND, Thailand 1960; Khanjanasthit & al. 1973; Chandrapanond, et al. 1973; Morris, et al. 1980). All measurements were made during the early afternoon in the family's home, and all household members were measured on the same day (with the exception of two individuals).

While we recognize and accept many of the limitations inherent in available growth charts (DuRant and Linder 1981) such as the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) growth curves, we can do little more during this initial data-collecting phase than compare descriptively our results with others already available. Clearly, since the NCHS charts are based on data biased toward bottle-fed infants, breast-fed infants may be identified as not gaining weight quickly enough.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Of the anthropometric data collected, only statures and weights for individuals 18 years old and younger are discussed here. Statures for age for
boys and girls are presented in Figures 3 and 4, and weights for age in Figures 5 and 6. The growth charts used for comparison are standard and widely used (NCHS 1975), and indicate changes in stature and weight for age normed on a U.S. sample. Blackened circles represent the mean values for weights or statures averaged for two-year age groups for Hmong children. No other descriptive analysis is presented because the small sample size could well produce spurious standard deviations. Each point represents data from four to ten individuals. However, we feel confident at this point that the patterns seen here will prove to be representative.

Mean statures for males are at the 25th percentile of U.S. norms for the 2-3 year olds (Figure 3), below the 5th percentile for 6-7 year-olds, and stay at about the 5th percentile until the 14-15 year-old age group, and fall below for other groups. The rate of stature increase slows down by about the age of 15 years, whereas the U.S. sample indicates significant slowing of stature increase at 15 years for rapid growers and 17 years for slower growers. A similar pattern is apparent for stature increase of females (Figure 4), with early statures at about the U.S. 25th percentile, later ones below the U.S. 5th percentile, and a decrease in the rate of stature increase between 14-15 years of age.

Mean weights for age for Hmong boys (Figure 5) and girls (Figure 6) are around the U.S. 50th percentile for 2-3 year-olds, and thereafter fall to between the U.S. 10th to 25th percentiles. Boys fall below the U.S. 5th percentile between 16-18 years of age, while the weights of girls stay at about the U.S. 10th percentiles.

Clearly, and perhaps obviously, growth charts generated by study of U.S. populations should not be applied to predict normal growth rates of Hmong children. Our results closely compare, however, with growth studies of children reported from Thailand. Hmong boys in our sample between 2-3 years of age are slightly heavier but the same height as are children of middle and professional class families in Bangkok,
FIGURE 3: Boys From 2 to 18 Years
Stature for Age

CHART FROM: NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS

= MEAN STATURE FOR 2-YEAR AGE GROUP, Hmong Males.

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FIGURE 4: Girls From 2 to 18 Years
Stature for Age

Chart from: National Center for Health Statistics

○ = Mean Stature for 2-Year Age Group, Hmong Females.
FIGURE 5: Boys From 2 to 18 Years

Weight for Age

CHART FROM: NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS

= MEAN WEIGHT FOR 2-YEAR AGE GROUP, Hmong Males.
FIGURE 6: Girls From 2 to 18 Years
Weight for Age

CHART FROM: NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS

• = MEAN WEIGHT FOR 2-YEAR AGE GROUP, Hmong Females.
Thailand (Khanjanasthiti et al. 1973). Compared to rural Thai village children in Nakorn Rajsimi Province, northeast of Bangkok, these Hmong children are within 1–2 inches in stature, but from seven to nine pounds heavier for boys and three to five pounds heavier for girls between two to five years of age (Chandrapanond et al. 1973). Of the rural Thai children, in a "typical" farming community, 76 percent were reported to be malnourished based on clinical and physical assessment. Thus, the Hmong children in our sample are quite comparable to well-nourished children from families with sufficient income from Bangkok, Thailand, and heavier for age than rural Thai (but most likely malnourished) children.

Anthropometric assessment of weight-for-height (or length, for infants) is considered to be an excellent indicator of current nutritional status (see Neumann 1979 for review). Two cutoff points are generally interpreted as potentially abnormal values. Values below the 5th percentile may indicate wasting, stunting, or both; values above the 95th percentile may indicate obesity.

Although the NCHS growth curves are widely used in clinical practice, their applicability to recent immigrant populations remains to be tested. Nonetheless, clinical assessments are made using NCHS growth curves. Table 9 presents data on the percentage of several age groups of Southeast Asian refugee populations in the 5th percentile and in the 95th percentile as determined by reference to the NCHS curves. Data presented compare values compiled by the U.S. Center for Disease Control's (CDC) Coordinated Nutrition Surveillance Program with values recorded for the sample of Hmong children measured in this study. The Southeast Asian data collected by the CDC included all ethnic groups represented from Southeast Asia, and not just the Hmong.

Several problems exist in interpreting these data. First, the values may be influenced by where the individual was conceived, by maternal diet, by previous disease experiences, by dietary history, by
length of residence in a refugee camp or in the U.S., and by other factors (Jelliffe and Jelliffe 1979). None of these factors are corrected for here, and consequently interpretations must be made cautiously. However, two general impressions are given by visual examination of these data. First, Hmong children are progressively shorter for age as they get older, compared to U.S. standards. This seems true for Southeast Asian refugees in general, but not as markedly. Secondly, a higher percentage of Hmong children are above the 95th percentile for weight-for-height than seems true for Southeast Asian refugees in general, as measured during 1980.

**SUMMARY**

This report concludes with a series of speculations attempting to integrate the dietary trends observed in the dietary survey with the anthropometric data recorded in the pilot study of growth and development.

If we may speculate about the significance of the anthropometric data for the Hmong, it may be that
children more likely to have been conceived under nutritionally adequate refugee camp conditions or in the U.S. (the 6-23 month group) are more likely to be heavier for length, whereas Hmong children more likely to have been conceived either under war conditions in Laos or under nutritionally inadequate refugee camp conditions (the 2-5 year group) are more likely to be lighter for length. Further (continuing along speculative lines), older children (the 6-10 year group) may as a group be heavier for length as a result of their more complete conversion to a "normal" U.S. diet, especially as influenced by eating practices in public schools.

Considerable additional effort is required to test these speculations, but research efforts to date indicate that the necessary data are possible to obtain. Such data should go a long way towards increasing our understanding of how people recover from nutritional deprivation, how dietary practices change over time, and what sort of biological consequences result from this kind of migration.

NOTE

*I am indebted to Ron Munger, who worked as Research Assistant on this project, and Yang Chu Ly, who worked as interpreter and who provided invaluable assistance with his skilled liaison services. I am also indebted to the Hmong people of western Washington who graciously tolerated our questioning, allowed themselves to be measured, and provided generous hospitality. Drs. W. Yamanaka, M. Muecke, Ms. H. Kohn, and Ms. K. Go Ang read and made useful comments on an earlier draft of this paper; responsibility for its accuracy and argument rests with me. Support for this work was provided by a grant through the Graduate School Research Fund, University of Washington, through PHS Grant #RR-07096.
REFERENCES


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HMONG REFUGEES IN NEBRASKA

William H. Meredith and Sheran Cramer

The Nebraska Indochinese Refugee Needs Assessment was undertaken to determine the needs of refugees living in the State of Nebraska and those factors that led to their adjustment. Although some Nebraska residents have gained knowledge about the refugee's needs from practical experience, this knowledge had been fragmented and piecemeal. The refugees themselves have provided yet another perspective on their needs. However, comprehensive empirical information has been lacking concerning refugees throughout the state. The Nebraska Indochinese Refugee Needs Assessment addressed that need. The needs assessment was one component of a larger grant administered through the College of Home Economics at the University of Nebraska and was funded by the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Post and Secondary Education.

The Hmong in Nebraska are of particular interest to the authors. Therefore, following an overview of the research methodology, the remainder of this paper will present the results of the needs assessment for Hmong families, followed by a brief comparison with other refugee groups surveyed.

METHODOLOGY

The Nebraska Refugee Needs Assessment consisted of 148 open-ended and forced choice items. The questionnaire addressed nine major categories of inquiry: socio-demographic characteristics; housing; employment; family; health; social environment and sponsorship; nutrition; and educational need. The instrument was translated into Hmong, Lao, Vietnamese and Cambodian.

A comprehensive list of names of Indochinese refugees residing throughout Nebraska was compiled...
from which names for interviewing were selected at random. A letter of introduction was sent to each selected family, followed by a telephone call asking permission to do an in-person interview. Persons representing each ethnic group were selected to do the in-person interviews. Due to geographic and economic constraints, eight interviews of refugees in outlying parts of Nebraska were completed by telephone. Training sessions were held to acquaint the interviewers with the questionnaire and with principles of interviewing.

Participation rates were high, with 94 percent of those refugees contacted agreeing to be interviewed. A total of 115 households completed the survey, including 49 Vietnamese, 19 Chinese-Vietnamese, 24 Hmong, 12 Cambodian and 11 Lao households. A total of 586 people lived in these households. This represented 30 percent of the state's 1,957 refugees. Frequency counts, chi-square and Pearson's r were used to analyze the data.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HMONG

Twenty-four households representing 118 residents were interviewed. Average household size was 4.9, with males accounting for 60 percent of the household members. The average age for the Hmong refugees in Nebraska was 19.7 (see appendix). Forty-two percent of the sample had lived in the United States for four to six years, 38 percent for one to three years, and only 21 percent for less than one year.

The Hmong adults over 20 years of age in Nebraska generally had a low educational level. More than half had no formal education (see appendix). Income was also limited. Slightly over 60 percent of the respondents earned $700 a month or less. Two factors which influence income and its adequacy are the number of adults employed per household and the size of the household. The unemployment rate was high with 46 percent of households having no employed members. Only one household had more than one person employed.
Of those employed, four worked for computer companies as processors or testers, two were electricians and two were welders. Other occupations were custodian, farm worker, case worker, laundry, and packing plant employee. While income for many Hmong households was limited, 46 percent of the sample responded positively to having enough money to meet monthly expenses.

In terms of housing, half lived in apartments and half resided in houses. Eighty-three percent were renting and the remainder were buying. Half of the households paid between $200 and $300 monthly for their housing. The remainder paid less.

NEED AREAS

**Housing**

The majority of the Hmong reported that they had no difficulties with housing. Of those who did express a problem, most frequently mentioned were the cost of housing and finding housing for large families. About one-third were concerned about the neighborhood they lived in and poor housing conditions.

**Employment**

Nearly two-thirds of the households reported problems with employment. Insufficient job skills, inadequate English, and the inability to find employment adequate to support a family were frequently mentioned difficulties. Those in rural areas expressed greater difficulty because of the lack of industrial employment. More than half of those employed stated dissatisfaction with their jobs, although underemployment was not indicated as a big problem. The degree to which various factors were perceived as employment problems can be found in the appendix.

**Family**

Two-thirds of the households reported problems relating to family life. Eighty-seven percent of those responding were concerned about being separated from family members. An equal number expressed fear
in communicating feelings to family and friends in the home country. One hundred percent said locating family members was a problem.

The Hmong households were in general not concerned about their children learning American cultural values and not accepting theirs, or about maintaining family customs in a new land. Conflicts between relatives living together was not revealed as a problem.

Health

Less than half of the refugee households perceived their health as a problem. However, 92 percent responded that stress and stress-related illnesses were of some difficulty for them. Stomach and teeth problems were frequently mentioned. Difficulty in getting medical, dental, and hospital care was seen as a problem for 59 percent. Ninety-six percent viewed homesickness as a hardship, while painful memories of the war and departure was viewed as a problem by 92 percent.

Social Environment

The social environment category covered many areas such as religion, ESL classes, sponsorship, and social status.

Two-thirds of the refugees thought there were enough English as a Second Language classes available to them, but only 45 percent were satisfied with these classes. The problems most often mentioned were the short duration of the classes, their lack of practicality to everyday living, and the lack of opportunity to practice. Child care was also mentioned by some as being inadequate. Ninety-two percent reported difficulties expressing themselves to others and being understood.

The Hmong households were about evenly split on how they viewed the help provided by their sponsors. Approximately one-half felt they had received an adequate amount of assistance. The remaining households said they had not received enough help. This
was particularly true for those having Hmong sponsors. Hmong sponsors were viewed as having limited resources with which to share.

About 40 percent of the Hmong stated they had difficulty in practicing their religion in Nebraska. However, only four percent reported any problem with Americans expecting them to practice their particular beliefs.

Eighty-seven percent saw problems with their inferior social status in America. A similar number felt prejudice against them.

Few refugees thought their children were experiencing school problems. However, many felt more educational opportunities were needed for adults.

Adult Educational Needs

The desire for additional information and/or assistance by Hmong adult household members is shown in the appendix. Preparing American-type foods was the category in which Hmong refugees were most interested. Strong informational needs were shown in the area of American customs and the American legal system. Information on financial management and consumerism was also widely requested, while less interest was expressed in information related to clothing.

One-half of the 35 items stating an informational or assistance need were consumer or financially related. Sixty-five percent of the questions in these areas were highlighted as areas of some or great need. Over two-thirds of the respondents desired additional information or assistance in relation to buying a house, paying taxes, financial record keeping, life and health insurance, using credit, and investing money.
COMPARISONS WITH OTHER REFUGEE GROUPS

Five Indochinese ethnic groups were examined in the needs assessment. The Hmong and their fellow countrymen, the Lao, clearly perceived greater need than did the other groups. The Vietnamese and Chinese-Vietnamese had a relatively low level of need compared to the Lao and Hmong. The Cambodians represented a middle position. The Vietnamese in the sample had the advantages of greater education and more exposure to the West. Fully one-third of the Vietnamese adults in Nebraska over the age of 20 had attended college. Very few in other groups had. They had also lived in the United States for a longer period of time as a group.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The statistical analysis using chi-square and Pearson's r showed the importance of several factors in adjustment. Length of time in the United States and education were the two independent variables most clearly related to the items in the questionnaire. Age, urban-rural, income and occupation had lesser relationships with the items. In terms of variance, length of residence in the United States and education were again the best predictors in the study. The longer the refugee had lived in the United States and the more education they had, the fewer problems the refugees reported experiencing.

CONCLUSIONS

The Nebraska Indochinese Refugee Needs Assessment provided considerable data that is helpful in better understanding the needs and adjustment of Hmong and other refugee groups in the State of Nebraska. Clearly the Hmong have many unmet needs. Employment in a new country with different skill levels is a difficult problem, as is the learning of a new language. Adult education needs are great in the areas of law, customs, and understanding financial and consumer-related information. Family problems related to the war and the departure are
ever-present. While much help needs to be provided for the Hmong in the present, it would appear that increased time in the U.S. and better education for the young will serve to aid in the adaptation process.

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and

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APPENDIX

PERCENTAGES BY ETHNIC GROUP
FOR MOST FORCED CHOICE ITEMS
(including all items showing Chi-square significance)

HMONG

HOUSING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you or members of your household have any difficulties with housing now?</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Much a Problem</th>
<th>Some Problem</th>
<th>No Problem</th>
<th>Does Not Apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The neighborhood you live in</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of housing</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crowded housing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor housing condition</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What type of housing is your current residence?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>50 - house</th>
<th>50 - apartment</th>
<th>0 - dormitory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - trailer</td>
<td>0 - single room</td>
<td>0 - other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Are you renting or buying your house?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>83 - renting</th>
<th>17 - buying</th>
<th>0 - other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

How much is your rent or mortgage payment?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>25 - less than $100</th>
<th>21 - $100-199</th>
<th>54 - $200-299</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - $300-399</td>
<td>0 - $400-499</td>
<td>0 - $500-599</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

360
INCOME

What is the total take home household income per month?

8 - up to $200/mo.  12 - $200-399/mo.  42 - $400-699/mo.
17 - $700-899/mo.  13 - $900-1099/mo.  4 - $1100-1299/mo.
4 - $1300-1499/mo.  0 - $1500-1699/mo.  0 - more than $1700

Do you have enough money to meet monthly expenses?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EMPLOYMENT

Do you or members of your household have any difficulties with employment now?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dissatisfaction with current job

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Much a</th>
<th>Some Problem</th>
<th>No Problem</th>
<th>Does Not Apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No employment

| 13 | 4 | 17 | 67 |

Underemployment (working at a level below occupation in home country)

| 13 | 8 | 63 | 17 |

Lack of job skills training program

| 33 | 29 | 25 | 13 |

Insufficient job skills

| 17 | 13 | 58 | 13 |

FAMILY

Do you or members of your household have any problems relating to family life now?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Much a Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being separated from family members</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locating family members</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear in communicating your feelings to family and friends in home country</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict between husband and wife over each other's role in the family due to change in culture</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children learning American cultural values and not accepting yours</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining family customs in a new land</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicts between relatives living together in the same household</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HEALTH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you or members of your household have any health problems?</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Much a Problem</th>
<th>Some Problem</th>
<th>No Problem</th>
<th>Does Not Apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stress and stress-related illnesses (stomachaches, headaches, fatigue)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homesickness</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painful memories of war and departure</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

362
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Much a Problem</th>
<th>Some Problem</th>
<th>No Problem</th>
<th>Does Not Apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of alcohol and drugs in your family</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in getting medical, dental and hospital care</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy and childbirth</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EDUCATION, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT**

Do you or members of your household currently have any problems adjusting to American life?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>83</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Much a Problem</th>
<th>Some Problem</th>
<th>No Problem</th>
<th>Does Not Apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inferior social status of refugees</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American prejudice against refugees</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in practicing your own religion</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americans expecting you to practice their religion</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties expressing yourself to, or understanding Americans due to language barriers</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation problems</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational opportunities available to you</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Are your children experiencing any school problems?  
Yes  13  No  75  N/A  13

Are you or other adults in your household receiving English training?  
Yes  71  No  25  N/A  4

Are there enough English classes for you and your family in your community?  
Yes  54  No  42  N/A  4

Are you satisfied with the English classes you and your family are receiving?  
Yes  38  No  58  N/A  4

Do you read newspapers in your own language?  
Yes  33  No  67  N/A  --

Do you read American newspapers and magazines?  
Yes  46  No  54  N/A  --

NUTRITION

Do you have any concerns providing a healthful diet to members of your household?  
Yes  33  No  67  N/A  --

CLOTHING

What clothing items do household members need?

25 - underwear  
25 - slacks and pants

29 - pajamas  
38 - shirts and blouses

17 - skirts  
50 - cold weather clothing

38 - dresses  
58 - shoes and overshoes
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Great Need</th>
<th>Some Need</th>
<th>No Need</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening a checking account</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing a checking account</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgeting</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing a savings account</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying taxes</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping financial records</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using credit</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying a house</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchasing health insurance</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchasing life insurance</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investing money</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passing a driver's test</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying a car</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic regulations</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family planning information</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding American legal system</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American customs</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating kitchen and household equipment</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food supplements such as vitamins and mineral pills</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing American type foods</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight control</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading recipes</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foods for feeding infants and children</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food shopping</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storing foods safely</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

365
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Great Need</th>
<th>Some Need</th>
<th>No Need</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clothing sizes</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting durable, washable clothing</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing clothing appropriate for use</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where to buy clothing</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the washing machine and dryer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for clothing</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using a sewing machine</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making your own clothes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling homemade items (clothing, crafts)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grooming items (soaps, toothpaste, deodorant)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE IMPACT OF INDOCHINESE RESETTLEMENT
ON THE PHILLIPS AND ELLIOT PARK
NEIGHBORHOODS IN SOUTH MINNEAPOLIS

Eddie A. Calderon

INTRODUCTION

This study examines several problems associated with Indochinese resettlement in the Phillips and Elliot Park neighborhoods of Minneapolis. It was done at the request of the city Mayor, who was concerned with the potential negative impact of several rumors regarding the presence of Indochinese settlers in the two communities. The rumors include:

1. The Indochinese take housing away from the American Indians, particularly those who spend part of the year living on a reservation. The American Indians were dismayed to find out that when they returned to the two neighborhoods their places were taken by the Indochinese.

2. The Indochinese immigrants are trained in the martial arts, and perceiving this as a danger to their security, the American Indians have considered arming themselves.

3. The Indochinese settlers take jobs away from the native-born minorities, particularly blacks and American Indians.

4. The Indochinese refugees may be caught between the blacks and the American Indians in a conflict precipitated by the whites: the Indochinese are receiving preferential treatment from the whites in both housing and employment opportunities.
5. The Minneapolis School District has experienced significant anti-Indochinese participation by school teachers as well as blacks, American Indians, and whites, and fights along racial lines are increasing among the students.

6. The city public health facilities have closed their doors to the native-born minorities in order to accommodate the special health needs of the Indochinese.

The above rumors seriously express the resentment of the native born minorities, whether factual or not, towards the Indochinese settlers because of the unfair advantages the latter allegedly enjoy. But before the author discusses the major issues involved in the study, he would like to discuss the following: 1) problems he encountered in doing the research; 2) a bird's eye view of the Phillips and Elliot Park neighborhoods; and 3) the reasons for unprecedented Indochinese migrations into the U.S. and Minnesota, and particularly the Hmong influx into the two neighborhoods and their sociological and statistical portraits.

Problems Encountered and Sources of Data

Upon receiving the Mayor's request, the Director of the Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights assigned the author to investigate these rumors during a three-week period from January 26, 1981 to February 13, 1981 and to submit a written report to him within a week thereafter.

The limited time given to the author to undertake a study was also aggravated by the fact that, practically speaking, no Indochinese data have ever been gathered specifically for the two neighborhoods. A further disadvantage that the author encountered was that he had to look for two work-study interns (a Hmong and an American Indian) to assist him in the research. Despite his exhaustive search which included the Hmong community, the University of Minnesota Asian Pacific Learning Center, social organizations and the Indochinese Student Association of the
University, the author was unable to get a Hmong intern. Luckily the author did not have problems getting an American Indian intern, but the latter was able to work for two days only because his eligibility for a work-study grant was in question. The author had no choice but to single-handedly do the task without assistance.

Nevertheless, the author was able to consult a number of data sources, including the following:

- Minnesota International Center (MIC)
- University of Minnesota Asian/Pacific Learning and Resource Center
- Minnesota International Student Association (MISA)
- Hennepin County Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) -- particularly Ms. Judy Powell, Senior Eligibility Technician
- University of Minnesota Native American Learning and Resource Center
- Minneapolis Public Schools -- particularly Mr. Ha Ho Tuong and Dr. Jermaine Arendt
- Minneapolis Health Service -- Mr. Jerry Thelen, Health Planner
- Minneapolis Housing Service
- Minneapolis Housing and Rehabilitation Authority (MHRA)
- Minneapolis Crime Prevention Unit -- particularly Mr. Paul John, Crime Specialist II
- Minnesota Public Interest Research Group (MPIRG)
- Elliot Park Neighborhood Group
- Phillips-Elliot Park Indochinese Resettlement Council
- Phillips Neighborhood Improvement Association (PNIA)
- St. Paul Public Schools
- Lutheran Social Service
- Lao Family Community Incorporated
- Branch I, Division of Catholic Welfare
- Native American Regional Center
- Minneapolis Police Department
- Dr. Glen Hendricks, Associate Professor, University of Minnesota
- Residents (including Hmong residents) of Phillips and Elliot Park neighborhoods
- The author's M.A. thesis (The Role of the United States in the Neutralization of Laos. Occidental College, Los Angeles, California)
- Minnesota Urban Indian Division
- The author's experience as a five hour per week volunteer at Branch I as of 1978

The Phillips and Elliot Park Neighborhoods

According to the neighborhood associations, the two neighborhoods studied have a very high transient population and a very high crime rate. According to the crime prevention specialist, Paul John, crime in 1980 in the Phillips neighborhood, including simple and aggravated assaults against strangers, sex offenses, and robbery, comprised 8.6 percent of the total crime city-wide. It was the highest if compared with all 82 neighborhoods in the city of Minneapolis. The Phillips population according to the crime prevention unit was 17,115 in 1980.2 Elliot Park, which had an estimated population of 6,000, had 5.9 percent of all city crime.3 In terms of burglary, which is separate from the above crime statistics, Phillips ranked 9th in 1980 while Elliot Park ranked 27th out of 82 neighborhoods.

In terms of living standards according to the city code, Phillips has 77 percent substandard dwellings and Elliot Park 61 percent. Phillips leads the city in this respect and Elliot Park is one of the runners-up.4 It also should be noted here that 45 percent of the problems in the Phillips neighborhood were attributed to intoxication.

The Indochinese Resettlement in
Local and National Perspective

Since the United States withdrew its presence militaire in Indochina in the mid 70s, its shores have experienced an unprecedented wave of immigration from the Indochinese countries of Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos. This exodus, however, must be
understood in light of events which began in 1954 with the defeat of the French colonial and military apparatus at the battle of Dien Bien Phu.5

With the defeat of the French also came her withdrawal from Indochina. This event culminated in the creation of new associated states: Laos, Cambodia, North and South Vietnam. But with North Vietnam becoming the only communist state, its ideological predilection might undermine the ideological preference of the rest of the Indochinese countries towards a democratic political structure. The United States then entered the area. However, American involvement in the Indochinese ideological struggle proved to be a disappointment. In 1975, its political and military presence there ended abruptly.

During the period when American troops were fighting on Vietnamese soil the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) enlisted the Lao and the Hmong to fight in Laos, particularly against the Communist elements called the Pathet Lao. As an incentive for their continued cooperation as allies against Communism, the CIA assured the Lao and the Hmong of protection should the United States withdraw from their country. When the United States abandoned its military involvement in Indochina, Laos fell to the Pathet Lao under Prince Souphanouvong. The Hmong and Lao people began their perilous journey out of their country. A mass exodus found its way into Thailand and from there these refugees were brought to other countries, the foremost of which was the United States.6

The Indochinese migration to Minnesota is quite substantial. According to Ms. Jane Kretzman, state coordinator of Indochinese refugees, there are at present between 24,000 and 25,000 Indochinese in the state and at least 12,000 or 13,000 of these are Hmongs. The large Hmong presence in Minnesota is partly a result of recruitment by Minnesotans who visited the resettlement camps in Thailand. Most of the Indochinese in Minnesota reside in the Twin Cities area, notably St. Paul and Minneapolis. In the two south Minneapolis neighborhoods of Phillips
and Elliot Park, the Hmong are the dominant Indo-Chinese group. They had migrated to the two neighborhoods because of the availability of dwellings and, at the beginning, the low rent. With their initial presence, a wave of Hmong migration to the area ensued. Hmong people, as is also true with many Asian rural people, tend to live close to their people, especially their family and their clan. Living close to each other provides them with security that they need to survive in a strange environment.

Sociological Portrait of the Hmong

The Hmong migrated to Laos from Yunnan Province in southern China around 1860. They are rural mountain people who live in extended families consisting of the eldest male, his wife, his children, their wives and children and possibly grandchildren. The extended family provides a network of mutual help, within which members are heavily obligated to support one another. As a result, the Hmong appear fiercely clannish to outsiders.

Because of their rural background, the Hmong were not well prepared to live in an urban industrial society such as the United States. They did not have a strong tradition of formal education or a written language until 1960. Literacy slowly developed after 1960 and further formal education was obtained when the male Hmong entered the military.

Statistical Portrait of the Hmong

According to Dr. Glen Hendricks (personal communication) Phillips had 297 Indochinese cases that were eligible for medical assistance and Elliot had 105. Ms. Judy Powell, Senior Eligibility Technician for Hennepin County AFDC, informed the author that each case can be translated into 5.5 people. By multiplying the number of welfare cases by 5.5 we could calculate the number of Indochinese people living in Phillips and Elliot Park.
There were, therefore, approximately 1,633 Indochinese, mostly Hmong, receiving some form of public assistance in the Phillips neighborhood and about 577 in Elliot Park. Nine and a half percent of the Phillips population are Indochinese; the Indochinese make up 9.6 percent of the residents of Elliot Park.

If we accept the claim of the PNIA survey that there were 15 percent American Indians in the Phillips neighborhood in 1979 and then consider the influx of Hmong into that neighborhood by the middle of 1980 which had allegedly displaced the American Indians, then the Hmong should be the number one minority in that area. The Hmong and Lao residents in Elliot Park may also have established themselves as the number one minority group in that area.

Another quantitative indicator of the Indochinese presence in Minneapolis generally, if not specifically in Phillips and Elliot Park, has been the proliferation of English as a Second Language (ESL) and bilingual education programs in the city schools. According to Mr. Ha Ho Tuong, bilingual education coordinator for the Minneapolis city schools, there were 1,198 students enrolled in ESL, the Limited English Proficiency Program (LEP), and the Bilingual Education Program in January 1981. Others not involved in these various programs are already mainstreamed and they go to the neighborhood schools. Those enrolled in these programs have to go to schools that do not normally serve Phillips and Elliot Park areas.

The Indochinese presence is also felt in the Minneapolis Health Department. The Department runs three major programs: child health, maternity, and family planning. Indochinese clients constitute 18.2 percent of those served by the Child Health Program; 34.9 percent of those served by the maternity program; and 5.9 percent of those served by the family planning program.

A reflection presumably of the increased Indochinese presence in Minneapolis is the increased Indochinese enrollment at the University of Minnesota.
According to the Office of Admissions and Records, there were 996 Asians enrolled at the University of Minnesota during Fall, 1980. They had become, for the first time, the largest minority student population on the University of Minnesota campus.

THE RUMORS: AN INTRODUCTORY REMARK

The major Indochinese group which has resettled in the Phillips and Elliot Park neighborhoods is the Hmong. Like most Indochinese, they have come to Minnesota beginning in 1975 with practically nothing on their backs. But of all the Indochinese peoples, the Hmong are the least educated. As noted earlier, the Hmong moved into the two neighborhoods because of cheap and available housing. Also the city building code is not as strictly enforced in these areas as compared with other more affluent areas. Because the Hmong are extremely clannish, waves of secondary migration brought them together in the two neighborhoods. The two neighborhoods also have many things to offer the Hmong living there: they are close to bus lines, stores, schools, the Hennepin County Welfare Department, charitable and social service agencies, and work if they can find it and they are ready.

The two neighborhoods have traditionally been known as Indian, but there are diverse opinions about how the Hmong presence will affect Indian institutions. Some leaders and people with responsibilities in the community have not considered the Hmong as a threat to them; they have expressed the view that Indians and Hmongs can co-exist as equals. They are also aware that the Hmong are good tenants and that they bother no one. Other Indians distrust the Hmong; they have suspected that the Hmong were taking all the available resources that were due to the community and that they were given preference by the government and the private agencies in any type of service. When the American Indians were informed by the author of the Hmong plight, how they came to the USA and Minnesota, and that their welfare funds came from the federal government and not the State
of Minnesota and its political subdivisions, some of them began to understand the situation somewhat better. Others still believe that they will be eclipsed by the presence of the Hmong in the neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{10} With the present economic policy under President Reagan, the need to share equally in the shrinking Minnesota pie as far as the Indochinese are concerned may give rise to antagonism and confrontation on the part of the native-born community.

When the collected rumors were read to the American Indians, they viewed them with mixed feelings. While many of them acknowledged that they had heard the rumors in regards to preferential treatment in housing and other social services, they were surprised at the rest and they consequently began to manifest anxiety.

\textbf{Rumor \# 1}

Have the Hmong taken housing away from the American Indians? The responses of those interviewed varied tremendously. Some point out that Phillips and Elliot Park are highly transient areas, where most people rent. Many American Indian renters are finding it increasingly difficult to move in and out of these neighborhoods as they have traditionally done. However, there are many potential explanations for this development.

It could be a result of a city-wide shortage of rental units. Since 1977, Minneapolis has experienced a significant decline in the rental vacancy rate. The apartment vacancy rate declined from 8 to 6.9 percent while the non-apartment rate went down from 2 to 1.6 percent.\textsuperscript{11}

This problem is further complicated by the absence of reliable statistics concerning American Indians in need of housing. No one in the city government nor in the community and private social service agencies seems to know exactly how many American Indians are homeless or were displaced by the Hmong.\textsuperscript{12} Also, the city statistics do not include the specific vacancy rates for Phillips and Elliot Park.
Still another problem is that the two neighborhoods are not generally suitable for such a goal as affordable housing. Affordable housing means being able to pay for it with not more than 25 percent of someone's income, and the dwelling should meet the minimum city code requirements. Since the two areas are 61 percent and 77 percent substandard, the majority of the residents in these areas have to content themselves with living in substandard dwellings.

The resentment of the American Indians with regard to inadequate housing in the two areas is not solely directed towards the Hmong. Archie Cash informed the author that some American Indians also resent the growing presence of the blacks in one section of the neighborhood. He said that the Indians felt that the blacks were also taking housing away from them.

The Hmong interviewed, on the other hand, expressed varied views. Most of the employed Hmong informed the author that they had not encountered any problems with the American Indians. (It should be noted here that their contacts with the American Indians were minimal if not totally lacking.) However, three unemployed male Hmong interviewed stated that they were harassed or shouted at by American Indians while walking on the streets. They said that they did not understand what was said, but they could sense that the remarks were not good. Instead of paying much attention to them, they continued to walk as though nothing happened.

The only serious confrontation recorded between a Hmong and a native minority person was reported to the author by a Hmong male who is at present an interpreter for a private social agency. He said that when he and his family used to live in the Phillips neighborhood, a black neighbor who lived in the apartment complex slashed his car tires twice, smashed his car windows, harassed his Hmong friends when they came to visit him and his family, and damaged the windows of his friend's car with BB gun shots. He had advised all Hmong in the complex to move out and they have since left the place.
Rumor # 2

Are the Hmong a threat to the American Indians because they are "masters of martial arts?" Have the Indians armed themselves?

First of all there is a prevalent misconception among many Americans that Asians are always trained in the martial arts after having seen Oriental movies or American movies which depict martial art scenes. Xang Vang, the Hmong project director of the local Lao Family Community, Incorporated, said the martial arts are not a typical sport for the Hmong, as they are for the Japanese, Koreans, and Chinese.

Secondly, the American Indians were surprised with the rumors that the Hmong's martial arts prowess was a threat to their security, and they began to show apprehension. They informed Archie Cash, the author's assistant, that this was the first time they had heard of this particular rumor. Even so, they displayed anxiety and stated that they would arm themselves if they had to. Archie Cash also informed the author that he had not heard nor seen any American Indian attempting to obtain arms in preparation for a possible confrontation. No other officials could corroborate nor contradict this possibility.

So far there has been no report of any physical confrontation which is racially related between the Hmong and American Indians. Although a lot of the male Hmong were highly trained soldiers and would not hesitate to fight when provoked or forced into a corner, Precinct 3 of the city police department informed the author that there had been no reports of physical confrontation between the two groups of people and no complaints lodged against the Hmong.

Rumor # 3

Have the Hmong been given preferential treatment in employment hiring to the detriment of the American Indians and blacks? Not many people know about overall Indochinese participation in the labor force.
Jane Kretzmann of the State Refugee Office once informed the author that probably 70 to 80 percent of the Indochinese were eligible and receiving some form of welfare. The percentage for the Hmong is slightly higher because they are the least educated minority of the four Indochinese groups. At present approximately 80 percent of the Hmong residents of the two neighborhoods qualify for welfare. However, no one knew the status of the remaining 20 percent.13

Existing information suggests that the Hmong are not highly employable. The majority are at present preoccupied with learning English. However, some have attended and are attending vocational training and according to Douglas Olney, a University of Minnesota researcher, there are now approximately 40 Hmongs attending the University as opposed to 20 last year.

Rumor # 4

Has the reported conflict between the Hmong vis-a-vis the American Indians and blacks been created or precipitated by the whites? The American Indian answer to this was no. Our research indicates that frustration among American Indians living on welfare, especially those who could no longer maintain the lifestyle of being able to move in and out of the neighborhood with ease as they had done before, has created the problems. Some informed the author that they were forced out of their apartments because the landlords had increased the rent, and subsequently, the Hmong have moved in.14 Hmong interviewed indicated to the author that they did not like the exorbitant rent but they did not have a choice. They too needed housing badly. They also informed the author that they had many complaints about their dwellings but very few even bothered to complain. Some said they felt that if they complained too much, they might not be allowed to apply for American citizenship. They also viewed themselves as strangers and their policy was to respect the customs and traditions of the host country.
Rumor # 5

Have there been widespread anti-Indochinese feelings by school teachers as well as black, American Indian and white students? Have there been physical confrontations?

Our sources concerning these questions are Dr. Jermaine Arendt, consultant in modern languages for the Minneapolis Public Schools, Mr. Ha Ho Tuong, bilingual coordinator, Ms. Carolyn Clemmons, a black administrator and now school teacher at Sanford Junior High School, and some white students. While all three school officials denied the rumor, they informed the author of one incident which involved a fight between two female students, one Lao and one black, at Sanford High School. They all said it was more of an exception than a rule. Fights are generally between whites and whites, blacks and blacks, on occasion between a black and a white, and they are not unusual since fights do occur in schools. The three school officials also stated that a fight between a black and a Hmong student erupted due to a misunderstanding. The Hmong male student came to the rescue of his countrymate during a wrestling match involving a black male student, not knowing that the match was part of the physical education program. A few white students who were interviewed stated that the Indochinese students generally speaking were well-behaved, studious and diligent, and were not likely to provoke a fight.

Rumor # 6

Have the Hmong taken over public health facilities which were formerly used by blacks and American Indians? In a letter to the author, Mr. Jerry Thelen, city health planner, states they have not. The rate of non-refugees seeking health services has dropped significantly because the health facilities have to change their target areas and criteria for free medical service due to the current financial squeeze. The health planner requested that the author and the Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights assist the
Health Department in arresting the probable disastrous effect of this rumor. Needless to say, the author has complied with Mr. Thelen's request during the course of his interviewing and research, but he could only reach a few people.

It is very apparent that the rumor that Hmong people receive preferential treatment cannot be easily eradicated. The feeling of xenophobia may not be founded on concrete facts and logic but after interviewing a dozen American Indians, Archie Cash wrote to the author a note (on February 19, 1981) summarizing his findings:

I have found a great deal of resentment against the Hmong living in the Phillips area. The Indian community feels that it is being crowded out of the neighborhood. Not only in housing and jobs, but many find the clinics are too crowded, as well as the buses and playgrounds. All those I have talked to believe something has to be done to relieve this situation before the conflict does get worse.

There was a widespread prediction in the early winter of 1981 that violent inter-racially motivated conflict would occur during the 1981 summer months when practically everyone would be outdoors enjoying the season. So far there has been no conflict that the author is aware of. After talking to the police precinct #3 personnel once again, he was told there was no such adverse report. One of the American Indian community workers the author knows well and whose resentment of the Hmong people was quite pronounced now feels that the American Indians have learned to accept the presence of the Hmong in the Phillips neighborhood. The two Minneapolis southside neighborhoods are fortunate that the reportedly widespread acts of vandalism, intimidation, and extreme harassment against the Hmong in the Summit area of St. Paul have not extended to the Phillips and Elliot Park neighborhoods.
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

Though it has become very apparent that the Indochinese settlers in the Phillips and Elliot Park neighborhoods have met with some initial hostility, confrontation appeared to be limited to isolated acts of vandalism and harassment, and there has been no report of inter-racially motivated violent physical confrontation between the American Indians and the Indochinese. However, the recent cuts in federal financial aids to states, including Minnesota, that handle the Indochinese resettlement program may adversely affect the relative peace now maintained between the Hmong and the native-born minorities. The participation of the Indochinese welfare client in sharing the shrinking Minnesota pie, the high unemployment rate, the housing problems, and the high crime rates of the two neighborhoods might further harm the cause of inter-racial harmony. These factors will certainly build frustration. We would like to recommend the following program to be undertaken by the city of Minneapolis:

1. To conduct a survey of the minority population, especially the Indochinese in the impacted areas of south Minneapolis and also to study the socio-psychological impact of the increased Asian enrollment in the Minneapolis Public Schools as a means to improve the situation and to clear the pervasive rumors about the Indochinese and other minorities.

2. To undertake an adequate educational campaign regarding the ways of life of the different minority groups in the neighborhoods and in particular the reasons behind the Indochinese immigration into the United States and Minnesota.

3. To construct programs of inter-cultural communication, aimed especially at unemployed youth. These are the people among whom the possibility of confrontation seems greatest.
4. To address the issue of shrinking financial aid to welfare recipients and to find an equitable solution.

5. To compile information on vacancy rates in Phillips and Elliot Park and to do a comparative study of housing patterns among the Hmong and American Indians.

6. To examine the extent to which landlords prefer Hmong tenants to American Indians and even whites and to explain why this is so.

7. To clear the stereotypes surrounding the Hmong people, e.g., that they are all trained in the martial arts. Also the pattern of inter-racial conflict in the two neighborhoods, not necessarily limited to Hmong and native-born minorities, should also be included here.

8. To be able to explain in depth to the residents of the two neighborhoods or the city of Minneapolis that the number of native minorities seeking health services from the city clinic has dropped significantly because the facilities have changed their target areas and criteria as a result of the financial squeeze and not due to Hmong presence.

9. To help disseminate scholarly reports on the Indochinese presence in Minneapolis.

NOTES

1. In November 1980, Sister Joan Connors, manager of Branch I, Division of Catholic Charities, convened two neighborhood conferences which involved people identified as leaders of both the American Indian community and the Indochinese groups in the Phillips neighborhood. The outcome of the meeting was summarized in part in the newspaper published by the Native American Regional Center, also in the Phillips neighborhood.
The article (Kenneth Stomski, "New Immigrants Raise Questions for Urban Indian Community," The Circle, vol. I, no. 10, December 1980) read in part:

The new immigrants are inflating the cost of rent in Indian neighborhoods that are already inflationary and may be depriving Indian people of already badly needed housing. Other rumors suggest that Indian people are being displaced in jobs and educational benefits to suit the needs of the Asian immigrants. The feelings of stress in the Indian community are real and may or may not be founded upon reality.

Nobody could exactly inform the researcher where the rest of the rumors came from. The rumors were given to the researcher by the Director of the Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights. Apparently they were reported by Mr. John Terronez who is currently working with the U.S. Department of Justice Community Tension Prevention Unit in Chicago, Illinois. Mr. Terronez had been to Minneapolis on numerous occasions and the researcher had met and talked to him about the rumors. Mr. Terronez informed the researcher that the rumors had also originated from the Summit area in St. Paul where the tension between the Hmong and black residents was reportedly very high. He said that the rumors were so great and real that he was assigned to go to the Twin Cities area to help alleviate the problem.

2. The PNIA conducted a survey in 1979 and arrived at a higher figure: 21,120. Their report stated that 78 percent were white, 15 percent American Indian, 4 percent black, and 2 percent Latino.

3. According to Julian Empson of the Elliot Park Neighborhood Association, there were 6,000 residents and 15 percent of them were minorities.
4. See the *State of the City 1980* (Minneapolis: Office of the Mayor and Planning Department).


6. They can also be found in the Philippines, France, Australia, Malaysia, Israel, etc.


8. There were 93 and 130 Vietnamese elementary and high school students, respectively; 201 and 204 Lao, 329 and 204 Hmong, and 11 and 26 Cambodian. In 1980 there were nearly 2,000 Asian students in the Minneapolis Public Schools. The increase of Asian enrollment is quite phenomenal, considering the fact that total enrollment in the city schools declined from 41,051 in 1979 to 39,675 in 1980. In 1979 there were 959 Asians; in 1980 there were 1,825, a 100 percent increase in Asian enrollment.

10. Archie Cash, our former American Indian intern, had found restlessness and frustration among the youth who were unemployed. But he noted that those who had obtained a high school education tended to develop better understanding of the refugee situation after they were informed. It is also worth noting here that one American Indian informed the author that the sufferings of the Indochinese refugees due to the American involvement in Indochina paralleled those of the American Indians referred to in that famous "trail of broken promises" expression.


12. The author has been, since 1979, a Phillips resident whose employment location at the Minneapolis Civil Rights Department since 1977 is in the Phillips neighborhood and has been a community volunteer at Branch I in the Phillips area since 1978. He has noted that apartment complexes which used to be inhabited by the American Indians are now rented to the Hmong. The author was told by many landlords and social workers that the landlords would rather rent the apartments to the Hmong because they have been outstanding tenants. They pay their rent on time, do not get intoxicated, are well-behaved, including their children, and tend to redecorate or improve the premises they occupy. Some landlords informed the author that the Hmong were their best tenants.

13. Dr. Glenn Hendricks, Associate Professor in Anthropology, stated in a paper read at the University of Minnesota on October 3, 1981 that
in his data 37 percent of the Hmong were of employable age. He said that percent of the employed Hmong were interpreters and agency personnel (welfare department, private social agencies, hospitals, etc.); 12 percent were classified as skilled; 30 percent factory workers; and the remainder were service providers or janitorial, cooks, etc. See his article "Hmong in the Workplace," in this volume.


15. Mr. Larry Harris, legislative lobbyist for the Minneapolis Public Schools, told the author that fights between native minorities vis-a-vis Indochinese were an uncommon, if not rare, occurrence because the latter usually went home after school. Most other students stayed after school for extra-curricular activities and fights did occur after school hours.

16. An American Indian informed both the author and Mr. Archie Cash on separate occasions that when he and his fellow American Indians saw a lot of Indochinese seeking service at the health center, he got discouraged and left the place without getting what he went there for.

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HMONG IN THE WORKPLACE

Glenn L. Hendricks and Brad B. Richardson

A fundamental issue in the process of Hmong resettlement has been the search for suitable employment. A variety of approaches have been taken to assist the refugee including formal training in vocational education units, employment placement by state and local welfare units, special public and private task force employment projects targeting refugees and probably most effectively, highly informal sponsor-initiated job seeking.

The problems encountered in job placement have been the now familiar litany of their lack of skills, lack of English, and unfamiliarity with American cultural patterns surrounding work and the workplace. All of these problems have been exacerbated by a generally sluggish economy providing little incentive for employers to take on the problems of the marginal employed. Unfortunately, too often any description of the situation of Hmong unemployment is a product of the particular viewpoint from which an individual comes into contact with the situation. In images created by the media, the Hmong are generally portrayed as industrious people, striving to find jobs but unable to locate them. The reality of the situation is hard to come by both because of the recency and fluidity of the migration as well as the unfamiliarity of Americans with alternative patterns of social organization. As a consequence, what is, is not always what appears to be.

In order to assist the many public and private attempts being made to find employment for the 10,000 Hmong refugees in Minnesota, a study was undertaken in the summer of 1981 to examine local employment need and employer experience with Hmong workers. To examine employment
levels within the Hmong community, complete household censuses were made of two clan-like groups, or pab neej, which are among the 10 such sub-divisions making up the local Lao Family Community, Inc. The groups are both Blue Hmong but come from different regions of Laos. Differences between the two groups include length of time they have been in the United States and their religious affiliation. One is protestant and assembles for worship each week in a local Methodist church. The other group is far from unanimous in its religious orientation but maintains frequent contact through patterns of visitation and joint economic undertakings. Admittedly these groups may not be a random sample of the entire Twin Cities Hmong population. However, they represent a significant set of the total population for which we wished to draw conclusions.

A few demographics of our sample of 77 households include a mean size of 5.57 persons, 55 percent of whom were males and 45 percent females. Twenty-six percent were five years of age or less, 31 percent were between 5 and 19, while 4 percent were 60 or more years in age. The remaining 37 percent was assumed to be in the employable age between 19 and 59. No person in this group was known to be unemployed because of physical disability although obviously for many of the females their roles in child care precluded employment.

Of this employable group 66 percent of the males and 34 percent of the females were reported to be employed, while another 29 percent of the males and 34 percent of the females attended school (typically English classes). A small percent were going to school while at the same time working (17 percent males, 4 percent females). We have no information about the school situation (e.g. whether it is full or part-time).

Over one-quarter (27 percent) of those employed held jobs servicing other refugees. These jobs include interpreters, aids and resettlement workers in welfare agencies, schools, and public health
units as well as the private settlement agencies such as Catholic Charities.

Of the remainder of those employed, 12 percent held jobs generally classified as skilled—electricians, welders, and machinists. Other categories of jobs included factory assembly workers (30 percent of those employed) and those in the service field such as handling food and in cleaning and maintenance activities.

We do not have data about wages, length of employment, or other critical information from the perspective of the Hmong about their experience as employees. One of the important findings of this census is that unemployment rates are considerably lower than we had been led to assume. Unemployment, however, remains higher than is desirable.

We were also interested in obtaining information about Hmong as employees from the perspective of their employers. There was a twofold interest in this area of inquiry. If an appeal was to be made to potential employers to take the risk of hiring the refugee, then it was thought that examining the experience of those who previously had been willing to employ them might be helpful. In addition, we were searching for lessons which might be learned from these experiences on how best to adapt to the admittedly special problems in employee/employer relations that would be encountered in the workplace. To this end structured interviews were arranged with 25 Twin Cities employers who were known to be present or past employers of Hmong. In a few situations more than one person was interviewed at a workplace.

We purposely met with on-line supervisors rather than personnel representatives for we wished to have the perspectives of those who had direct experience with the issues to be raised. In some cases it was also possible to spend time observing the Hmong workers as they carried out their tasks. Work situations ranged from assembly lines in some
of the cities' largest industries to the costume department of a local theater. The results of these interviews lead to the following conclusions.

GENERAL OPINIONS OF HMONG EMPLOYEES

To begin the focused phase of the interview, employers were asked, "What do you think of Hmong as workers?" Twenty-five, or 86 percent, of the twenty-nine respondents indicated the Hmong to be very good workers. In addition, many went on to state that the Hmong were "some of the best workers" they had. This was particularly true in organizations where the Hmong were employed in assembly, or piecework occupations (e.g. computer assembly).

Some typical statements made by employers were:

"They have worked out very well. Our company is very impressed by them generally. They are very good workers in our production department." (supervisor/computer assembly)

"Well, they're generally harder working than the American workers. For example, after lunch American workers like to take their time getting back to work while (name of employee) is on the job at the specified time, again on the dot."

(supervisor/metal shop)

"Hmong are very good workers, never absent, work hard." (manager/metal shop)

In general, employers are impressed by the productivity of the Hmong. Initially there appears to be a period of some difficulty in training due to limited English language skills. Once trained, however, Hmong are reported to be better workers than the average American worker. As might be expected, this sometimes results in negative reactions by other members of the workforce because the Hmong are perceived as "rate-busters." (See Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939). Contrary to what might be expected,
this "rate-busting" behavior did not contribute to any major difficulties concerning either efficiency or social relationships among employees.

As the Hmong become assimilated into the workforce, often their productivity become more consistent with that of the rest of the workers. At about this point in the Hmong employees' tenure, acceptance by other workers also occurs further reducing antagonism. Indications are that the productivity of the Hmong remains slightly higher than that of other workers. It only coincidentally approaches conformity with the events referred to here.

Employers not initially responding with statements of praise concerning the Hmong were influenced in their general opinions by cultural differences. The language barrier was particularly problematic for some.

In addition to language, one employer found the time orientation of the Hmong to be different and her impression of the Hmong overall was:

"Hmong as workers want to make a go of it. They're very competent at what they do, but their sense of time is different. They are much more 'relaxed.' They're not always so prompt with getting information that they are sent out to obtain." (supervisor/social service)

One of the difficulties encountered by those employing Hmong in occupations servicing other Hmong is that the situation requires much more informal behavior than employers are accustomed to. This contrasts with typical behavior in a bureaucratic setting. Americans tend to be much more "business oriented," expecting more task oriented, formal communication patterns. In contrast, Hmong proceed at a much more deliberate pace discussing family and friends, perhaps accompanying a client to see someone else before addressing specific work-related tasks.
Only one other negative evaluation of Hmong workers came from a supervisor at a food processing plant who alluded to cleanliness problems when Hmong workers first came to the organization. In sum, however, she stated:

"Hmong attitudes toward work are generally better. They're actually good hard-working people. Sometimes communication can be difficult so you just have to go a little slower for them because English is not their first language."

PERCEPTIONS OF ATTITUDES TOWARD WORK AND THE WORKPLACE

Much of the literature on studies of organizations has focused on the relationships between job satisfaction, attitudes, and productivity (e.g. Kahn, 1956; Katz et. al. 1951). In line with these studies, one area of particular interest for the present research was the degree of agreement between Hmong and American employees in their attitudes about work and the workplace. Employer perception of the Hmong refugees as contrasted to other members of the workforce was tapped by asking: "Do you see any difference in attitudes toward work and the workplace between the refugees and the typical American worker?"

Indications are that employers generally perceive differences in attitudes. Eighteen respondents, or 62 percent of the sample, reported "yes", there are differences in attitudes. Twenty-eight percent (n=8) reported no difference in attitudes, while 10 percent (n=3) reported neutral responses to the question. Table 1 illustrates further subdivisions of these general response categories with their corresponding frequencies.

Typical neutral responses were exemplified by statements such as:

"I think it could go both ways, some might see them as working harder, some might not."
(coordinator/social service)
"I don't know about the American counterparts, but they are different from Lao in that they don't spend all their money; they still take the bus even though they could buy a car." (supervisor/employment service)

### TABLE 1. Differences in Attitudes Toward Work and the Workplace ("Do you see any difference in attitudes toward work and the workplace between refugees and the typical American worker?")

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Work harder&quot;</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Keep busy&quot;</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental focus</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual response</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed opinion</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No difference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable (nature of job)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses in the "no" category were often the result of organizational constraints (e.g. unions) which masked the ability to perceive differences within the workforce. Union shops in mass production factories are the best example of these constraints. According to respondents in these situations, production and job performance—the primary criterion on which most employers based their opinions for this question—are so routinized and regulated that attitudinal differences have little observable impact.

Where differences in attitudes were said to exist, numerous categories of responses emerged from the data. The most common response, however, as can be seen in Table 1 above, was that the Hmong were "harder work—
ing." Statements in this category included a perception of the Hmong as "believing in work in itself" with the resultant impression that Hmong are "generally harder working" than their American counterparts. Similarly, although categorically distinct, employers believed that because of this difference in attitudes, Hmong are able to "keep busy," or "find something to do" when they finish their specifically assigned tasks.

"If they would finish sewing they would want to clean to earn their money. One day I came back and asked where (name of employee) was and I was told she was in the back cleaning because she had finished early." (supervisor/clothing production)

A third subdivision which emerged from the data was that the Hmong workers focused more on instrumental (the task aspects of work, i.e., concern for the end product), as opposed to the expressive (social) aspects of work which Americans were said to emphasize.

"They keep to themselves, don't voice opinions, likes or dislikes, just do their job as they're told, not like American workers who are always questioning how things are done." (supervisor/accounting department)

"When they come to work, they come to work; not to run off and hide in the can or try to sneak outside for awhile or something." (supervisor/packing plant)

Although positive attitudes toward work and the workplace—two dimensions of what has been researched extensively in the "job satisfaction" literature—have not been supported as contributing directly to productivity, some indirect relationships between attitudes and absenteeism and turnover have been demonstrated by other researchers.
The data from the present study are consistent with the studies cited above; employers report that the absenteeism rate for refugees appears to be much lower than that of the general workforce. Table 2 illustrates this skewed distribution toward "less absenteeism."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizations Indicating</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Very Low</th>
<th>Never Absent</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(N=25)</td>
<td>4 (16%)</td>
<td>8 (32%)</td>
<td>11 (44%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is clearly visible from the table above, refugees are never reported to be absent more than "average." The majority of the employers place refugee absenteeism in the never absent category (44 percent) while very low absenteeism is reported by 32 percent of the respondents.

Due to the relatively short period of time refugees have been employed in Twin Cities organizations, it is not yet possible to demonstrate the relative percentages for categories of turnover rates, as it is for absenteeism; however, reports strongly support the notion that refugees are less likely to terminate employment once hired. Eight organizations did indicate that their termination rate among refugees was "none." Other respondents suggested that the turnover rate for refugee employees was very low.

"No one has quit in fourteen months."
(supervisor/clothing manufacturer)

This is not to suggest, however, that Hmong never quit; indeed, two respondents from one organization indicated that there was a period early in their experience with Hmong employees in which there was a "wave of turnover."

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"Since that first wave there has been little turnover." (supervisor/packing plant.)

Reasons for turnover have generally been idiosyncratic and have little to do with intraorganizational causes.

"One quit because his brother died and he apparently had to take on other family responsibilities." (supervisor/metal shop)

"Some quite to have babies." (supervisor/food processing.

COMMUNICATION PATTERNS

To assess the extent to which language impinged upon the productivity of the Hmong worker, employers were asked, "Has language been a hindrance to proper work performance?" Responses were largely in the affirmative with 33 percent of the respondents reporting that language was a problem and 52 percent of the respondents indicating that language was "sometimes a problem." Only 15 percent found language not to be a problem. It is not surprising that this latter group found no difficulty arising from communication since these organizations hired Hmong employees based on a language criterion (e.g. bilingual workers for social service organizations).

Organizations experiencing only minor communication difficulties or difficulties of a sporadic nature are distinguished from organizations experiencing major communication problems by their ability to adapt quickly to the idiosyncratic needs of the workforce. These adaptable organizations also experienced the most difficulty during initial stages of employment of Hmong workers with an ensuing pattern of reduced communication problems.
Has Language Been a Hindrance To Proper Work Performance?

"At first there was some difficulty, but not any longer. Some of the older ones can communicate with them and many now understand English better." (manager/manufacturing)

"As far as sizing, yes, but interpreters help out and the problems are minimal." (supervisor/clothing manufacturer)

"You have to show them what to do as well as try to tell them. Once they understand what you want done they're very good workers. Now that there are others working here it is easier because they can show the newcomers." (supervisor/janitorial service)

Organizations where communication was perceived as a major problem area generally employed Hmong in jobs requiring more varied skills (e.g. telephone contact with the public, metal working, and reading of blueprints), and were often more rigid in their training procedures.

"It's very difficult to train someone without good language skills."

In organizations where Hmong employees did not speak English well enough for supervisors to communicate directly with them two strategies were implemented. One was the use of interpreters to provide assistance in communication and the other was the use of a bilingual employee within the work group as a liaison between management and the workers. In each case, almost exclusively Hmong work groups were maintained in an effort to "more efficiently communicate" organizational expectations to the Hmong.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE EMPLOYERS

It is interesting to note that unanimously respondents did not regret hiring Hmong employees and indicated they would hire these workers again. When
asked, "If you had your choice, would you hire these workers again?" Some of the more typical responses were:

"Definitely, I would fill every new vacancy with Hmong if the American workers accepted this practice." (supervisor/clothing manufacturer)

"I would definitely hire again." (supervisor/packing plant)

"Yes, all I could get, but nationals give us trouble if we hire too many." (supervisor/janitorial service)

One employer suggested that future employers not "just rush into the matter" of hiring Hmong employees. Rather, this respondent suggests a management-oriented approach to the decision, first evaluating whether or not management "wants them."

"You have to evaluate if management wants them, if not it will never work out. If there is a union it can be problematic because nationals sometimes protest and this has to be a consideration in the management decision." (supervisor/janitorial service)

Included in the decision to hire Hmong employees is the issue of training. Nine of the organizations involved in this research hired Hmong workers who had been trained prior to employment. Sixteen organizations hired Hmong for jobs in which they (the organizations) had to train the new employees on the job.

Organizations which hired Hmong with prior training indicated that these employees were quite competent.

"They have a very good program over there (at the community college). They know exactly what to do once they come here. Of course we have to train them to use our equipment but
basically they are trained well." (supervisor/janitorial service)

Organizations providing training found it to be a somewhat difficult task. Once trained, however, they felt their Hmong employees were good workers. The difficulty most often expressed was the pace with which training could proceed.

"It's very difficult to train without good language skills." (personnel/metal shop)

"[You] have to show them what to do as well as try to tell them. Now that there are others working here it is easier because they can show the newcomers." (supervisor/packing plant)

One respondent detailed the implementation of a preceptor system in which new employees are trained by other Hmong employees of longer tenure who both know the job well and are able to communicate with the new Hmong employees.

"We use a preceptor system which works quite well since these are unskilled jobs." (supervisor/computer manufacturing)

In addition to training, respondents were also questioned about any advantages that more knowledge of the Hmong culture might provide. The general response was two-fold. First, respondents believe that, however interesting, knowing more about the culture in and of itself, would not benefit an organization in terms of meeting its goals. Second, even though general knowledge about the culture would not be a great asset, more knowledge about the individual employee might be helpful as a way to increase communication channels between employer and employee.

Three individuals indicated that more knowledge of the Hmong employment situation on the part of the business community might contribute to more Hmong being hired in the Twin Cities area. These respondents suggested that management personnel or executives from businesses presently employing Hmong could
be very persuasive if they jointly addressed the busi-
ness community to create an awareness of both the
Hmong employment problem and the positive experiences
these organizations have had with Hmong workers.

The positive reactions of employers concerning
their Hmong employees led us to request comments on
the potential for private support of employment ser-
vices assisting Hmong in obtaining employment in the
Twin Cities. Reaction was not favorable to this pro-
position. Present employers expressed opinions that
they were already contributing to reducing the employ-
ment problems of the Hmong. Their help was in
supplying jobs, but in times of a "slow economy,"
these respondents point out that it would be unwise
to invest in something they viewed as corporate
funding of a social welfare program.

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1 In fact, Lawler and Porter (1967) have found that per-
formance precedes satisfaction and is the result of
the equitable reward for effort.

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