

NOTES  
*on*  
TRADITIONAL  
HMONG CULTURE  
*from*  
MONTANA HMONG  
RECOLLECTIONS

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*To all Montanans  
however long they or their ancestors  
have inhabited this land*

## Preface

In many respects, Vang Pao is just like other Montana farmers. He drives a late-model pickup truck, worries about the low price of wheat and the high cost of feeding his large family and, occasionally, attends an American Legion dinner.

Vang Pao is also a Laotian general whose Hmong troops proved to be one of the few combat units with any success against Communist troops during the fourteen year war in Southeast Asia. By 1971, one-tenth of the population of Laos (315,000 people) had been forced from their homes into refugee camps.<sup>1</sup> Most of these refugees were Hmong, since Hmong inhabited the northern mountain regions closest to the fighting. Since the end of the war, countless other Hmong threatened by North Vietnamese reprisals have fled across the Mekong River to Thailand where they live in restricted areas.

Hmong able to migrate from Thailand to America reside in states ranging from Rhode Island to California. About two hundred live in Montana, relatives of Vang Pao and others, who came with the help of American sponsors. Vang Pao settled his people in the Bitterroot Valley because it "looks like home and makes my heart feel glad."

Visiting Vang Pao's 425 acre farm north of Hamilton, in the fall of 1976 when the Hmong first settled in Montana, was like traveling to Southeast Asia. Vang Pao's agile mother, who claims to be a hundred but is probably in her eighties, was outside in loose-fitting black trousers and a fur cap, chasing the goats out of the vegetable patch. Lively, copper-skinned children ran in and out of the house, never closing doors against Montana's chilling autumn winds. The children's shy, lovely mothers conversed animatedly in Hmong among themselves, but stayed out of the view of visitors. A large rooster strutted imperiously in the kitchen.

Much has changed since then. Grandmother has added colorful knee socks and a print blouse to her black peasant garb. For very special occasions she wears a pants suit. The women now speak English, except for grandmother who says she is "too old to learn." They insist that visitors sit while having a glass of 7-Up or a cup of cocoa. Children scoot around on motorbikes, shut the doors, and leave their boots, fishing poles and skis outside with the rooster.

Long an adaptable people, the Hmong are determined to come to terms with their new, American way of life. But what of the old ways? Many Hmong have never experienced the self-sufficient prewar culture that characterized them before 1960. Susanne Bessac, a Missoula anthropologist, decided Hmong traditions could better be understood through an art exhibition displaying their unique cultural heritage. She enlisted the help of Jo Rainbolt, a Bitterroot

writer and photographer, who became a frequent visitor to the Laotian farm after researching a newspaper story there in the fall of 1976.

We agreed that, as much as possible, this should be the Hmong's own project. They would tell us what to include and how best to display it; we would act as catalysts and translators. With a generous grant from the Montana Committee for the Humanities administered by Roberta Manis of the University of Montana Continuing Education Division, we began.

This pamphlet, meant as background information for the works on display, is based on what the Montana Hmong told us (unless otherwise indicated). Many Hmong have helped, especially Mua Cha, a Hmong Tsai from Houa Phan province in Laos, who acted as interpreter, assistant, arranged for photographs, wrote letters, located objects, arranged meetings and much else. Special thanks go also to Pa Foua Ly, Youa Ly, and Mee Bliaya Mua, all White Hmong from Xieng Khouang province, for translating for us; to Tong Lo (White Hmong from China), Ying Thao (Green Hmong from north of Sam Neua), and Shoa Thao and Pai Lo (White Hmong from Xieng Khouang province), for telling us about the life and art of women in the older days; to Mrs. Louise Reese for information; to Mr. and Mrs. Robert Clark for the loan of their extensive collection; to the Anthropology Department of the University of Montana for picking up loose ends, and to David Hunt and staff of the Missoula Museum of the Arts for hanging the display.

The finished manuscript was read by Hmong fluent in English. We tried to follow their corrections but, of course, the data presented is, in the final analysis, entirely our own interpretation. We are responsible for all mistakes of fact or emphasis.

A people in transition, the Hmong are living a new life in Montana with a characteristic Hmong blend of courage and determination. We do not pretend to understand the complexity of their situation in this country, nor their varying adjustments to their new environment. What we are attempting to do is present a look at their past through traditional customs and art forms. A knowledge of Hmong tradition should help Montanans better understand and appreciate these new neighbors. Perhaps such knowledge will allow young Hmong to do what our assistant, Mua Cha says he does: "Learn your way while keeping mine."

Susanne Bessac  
Jo Rainbolt

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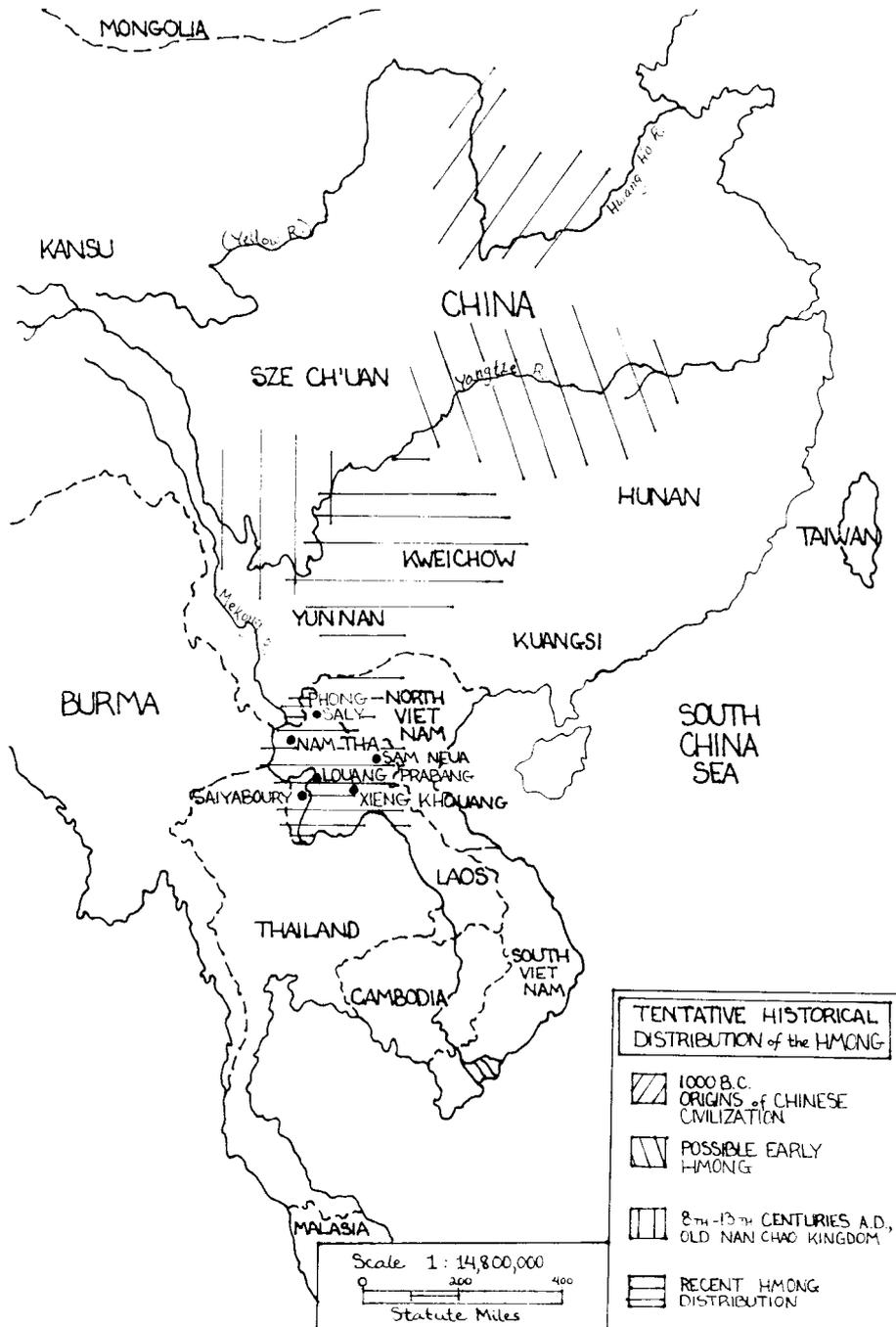
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## I Who are the Hmong?

Before fleeing their country, the Montana Hmong considered themselves loyal Laotian subjects. The Lao speak a language similar to Thai, a language distantly related to the Malayo-Polynesian languages spoken by native Hawaiians. Their origins, like those of the Hmong, are from China. The aristocracy of Laos originates from the old kingdom of Nan Chao in the present Chinese provinces of Sze-ch'uan and Yunnan. The Hmong believe that their ancestors were also in some way associated with this kingdom, perhaps a tribute-paying kingdom. Nan Chao was established in the 8th century A.D. and destroyed in 1253 by Kublai Khan, Mongol emperor of China at the time the Venetian merchant, Marco Polo, visited the "Central Kingdom." Actually, the migration of Thai speaking peoples from China began much earlier and still continues.

In the 14th century, Fa Ngoun, brought up at the brilliant court of Ankhor Wat in what is now Cambodia, founded Lan Xang, "kingdom of a million elephants," a term still used by the Lao for their country. Lan Xang lasted until 1694, when it broke up into separate kingdoms. One of these included the present province of Xieng Khouang from which come Vang Pao and his family.

Although the Lao remember coming from China, much of their culture is influenced by India. Theravada Buddhism is the official religion and each Lao village is dominated by a temple complex or *wat* guarded by bronze temple dogs, like those on display. Lao script is a variation of ancient Indic script.

Lao are noted artists and craftsmen. The women weave silks in soft colors on home looms which Montana Hmong wear at festivals alongside their own traditional Hmong costumes. The rich borders of these skirts are woven separately. Hmong women fashion these borders, shown on display, for themselves and friends by using the designs and techniques previously used for making hat bands.<sup>2</sup>

The Lao love flowers. They make elaborate flower and fruit offerings called *baci*. These are arranged in embossed silver bowls like the one on display. The Hmong custom of tying white strings to their wrists to capture good fortune is also originally a Lao practice.

Hmong usually do not intermarry with Lao. They say one of the main reasons for this is that, with the Lao, the new husband moves in with the wife's family. This custom is unnatural among the strongly patriarchal Hmong.

There are many ethnic groups in Laos besides the Lao and the Hmong. Some of these are tribal Thai (Red, White, Black), Tibeto-Burmesse speakers such as the Akha and Lolo or Lisu, and Yao speakers such as the Iu Minh whose language is closely related to that of the Hmong. The people the Lao

encountered when they first came to Laos were Austro-Asiatic speaking hunters and fishermen whom the Lao contemptuously called "Ka" (slaves). The official name for them is Lao Theung. Montana Hong says they call these people "The First," and often considered them as brothers.

The Hmong call them "The First" because they believe all people originally came out of a hole, and that the Lao Theung were the first to emerge. The Hmong respected the Lao Theung's knowledge of the land and their special powers, in part derived from a pact with the snake-dragon kings of the dangerously fast mountain rivers. The Lao Theung will never drown where no one else dares to swim. This story explains why.

## WHY THE FIRST INHABITANTS OF LAOS WILL NEVER DROWN IN THE NAM ET RIVER

told by Mua Cha

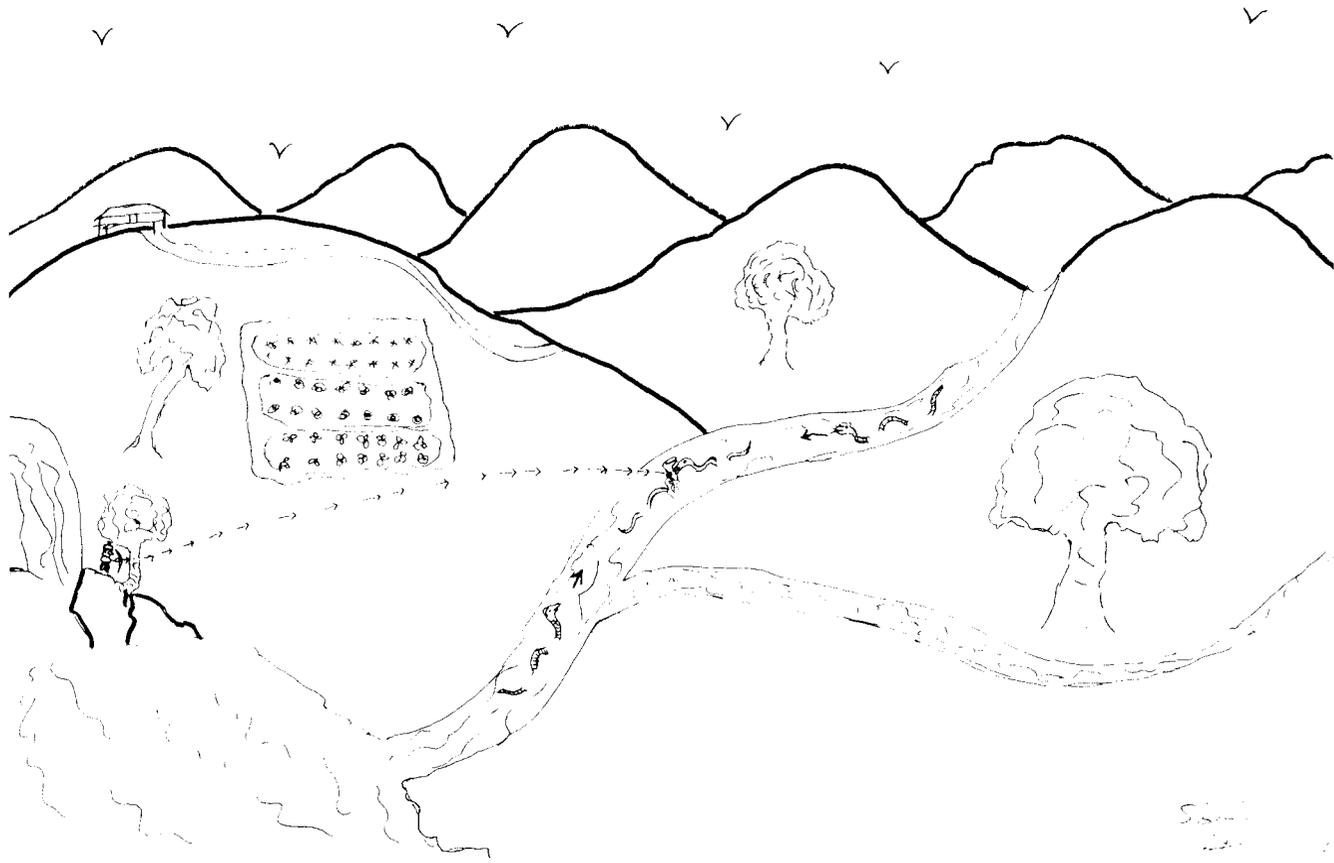
*There were three brothers living in a small settlement of only three houses. One night, one of them had a very vivid dream. A young man came to him in his sleep and said, "I need help from you. Please come tomorrow morning with your arrows. Come to the big rock by the side of the river and wait for me. I am going to marry the River King's youngest daughter (the youngest daughter is always supposed to be the most beautiful) but she has another suitor and he will fight for her hand with me tomorrow morning. I am not sure I can beat him, so I need help from you. You will see two dragons. The green-headed dragon is me; do not shoot it. If the red-headed dragon is on top, shoot it."*

*All night he lay awake wondering why he dreamed like that. "Should I go to the rock, or not?" he asked his wife. Finally, before dawn when it was still quite dark, he arose, took his crossbow and arrows, went to the big rock, and waited. At the first glimmer of light when he could not see very well, he heard a noise and saw the waters of the river churn, rising up high, then ebbing away. The water rose again—wow! so high—and then he saw the red-headed dragon rising to the top. He thought, "That is it. Now I know that my dream told the truth." The waters of the river rose up again, and again the red-headed dragon was on top. So he aimed his arrow and shot. The red-headed dragon sank from sight.*

*The next night the young man of the previous night appeared again in his dream. He said, "I am so happy you helped me. From now on you can fish and go anywhere on this river, south to north; every place I will help you. Anything you need, I will bring you. I will never let your people die in this river. I am now king of this river, all of it, north to south. All the fish of this river are for you to catch."*

*Three days later the hunter decided to test the river. He put a three-day-old baby into the waters of the river. The waters gently supported the babe. He could not sink because the dragon king protected him.*

*The dragons of the rivers have scales which shimmer blue, red, and purple. When the sunlight reflects from them, it creates a rainbow. That is why the Hmong people say rainbows are dragon snakes. Dragon snakes are dangerous for Hmong people; that is why Hmong fear the rainbow.*



Small  
text

Some say Hmong means "free men." Others think that it means "men on top," both figuratively and actually. The Hmong in Laos preferred to make their farms higher up the mountains than did any of the other people. Too, they believe their ancestors conquered other groups in China. In time, old divisions became blurred and they all came to be one people.

In one of the south Chinese Hmong dialects the term Hmong also means "embroidery."<sup>3</sup> This is not the case in the dialects spoken by Montana Hmong. Some Hmong suggest that there is a connection between the term Hmong and Mongol, and that the ancestors of the Hmong spent a period of their history living north of the "Yellow River," in a land of long, cold nights. Others maintain that the Hmong once had light hair and that it is due to the Chinese (the Lin-min, or black hairs) they now have dark hair.

Recent Chinese research has isolated three related languages, one of which is Hmong.<sup>4</sup> These languages, together with Yao languages, seem to belong to a unique language family which is not clearly related to any of the other languages of Asia. Like Chinese, Hmong is a tonal language, using eight main tones and one intensifier.

Recent efforts by French and Americans have resulted in a Roman alphabet with which to write Hmong. It uses the consonants b, s, j, m, g, v, and d written at the end of words to indicate the tone. Double vowels are to be read as an "ng" ending, thus *geej*, the six pipe flute, is sounded "geng" in a high descending tone. In the writing of Hmong words in this pamphlet, we use a homemade approximation of what the Hmong word sounds like to us followed by the term in italic as written in the new alphabet.

The Chinese call the Hmong, Miao 苗, rice sprout, as can be seen from the Chinese character, a field with plants. The Southeast Asian term Meo is a derivative of Miao. Many scholars believe that the Chinese term reflects the fact that these people are descended from early rice cultivators in the Yangtze Valley who probably taught the Han Chinese how to grow paddy rice. Others believe Miao is another way of saying "hayseed" or "country hick," and that it means non-Chinese barbarian. Some Montana Hmong believe the term is a derisive way of calling them "cat people," either because they are as fast and agile as cats or because some Hmong are said to change into tigers.

The earliest Chinese mention of people they call Miao shows them living in the central Yangtze plain south of the land of the legendary Emperor Shun (2255-2206 B.C.), the present provinces of Hupeh, Hunan, and Kiangsi. According to the *Shu Ching*, or Classic of History, they were banished by Yu the Great to San Wei which some have located in the northwestern Chinese province of Kansu.<sup>5</sup> But all this is only legend.

The first mention of what are undoubtedly the ancestors of the Hmong locates them in the Chinese province of Kweichow during the time of the T'ang Dynasty (618-906 A.D.).<sup>6</sup> Contact with the Chinese increased during the period of Mongol rule. By the subsequent Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.) Chinese

colonists were moving into the area and seriously threatening the Hmong. During Manchu times (1644-1911) Chinese scholar officials delighted in painting books about the "barbarians" of the western and southern provinces—often based on questionable information. An illustration from one of these books, or *Maio-tze Albums* as they are called, owned by an old family in Butte, Montana, is included in the museum exhibit.

According to the Hmong it was Chinese officialdom that ordered them to wear clothes of distinguishing colors which established the Red, Black, White, Blue (*Ch'ing*, which means bright in Chinese or sky-colored) and Multicolored or Flowery (*Hua*, the Chinese term) Hmong in order to exaggerate differences and, thus, keep them divided and unable to fight the Chinese. Ideally, then, there should be five main Hmong groups or tribes (called *Chia* or house by the Chinese) each distinguished by basic costume design, language, and place of origin. Perhaps things were once that simple; today there are many different Hmong groups which can only be organized into this five-fold system by a *tour de force*.

Montana Hmong overlook differences and consider themselves a unified group, although some remember coming from different areas in China at different times. The Laotian Hmong recognize two types of Hmong: the old Hmong, *Hmoob Laug*, who settled near large settlements in highland Laos, and the new Hmong, *Hmoob Tshuab*, who moved into the wilderness areas. Some of the White Hmong, "Dae" (*Dawb*), of the Xieng Phouang province, came from Sze-ch'uan under the leadership of Bliayao Kiatong of the Lo family. They were later supplanted by men of the Ly family, which resulted in a feud. The leaders of the Faydang Lo following joined the Pathet Lao, while the Ly following remained loyal to the king of Laos. Vang Pao is old Hmong.

We were not told where the Green Hmong, Hmong "Njua" (*ntsuaab*) came from in China. (Njua refers to a well-saturated color which can be either green or blue.) It is not clear if the Hmong Njua should be equated with the Chinese category of Blue (*Ch'ing Miao*) or if they are Flowery (*Hua*). The Montana Hmong explain that both the Hmong Njua and the Hmong Tsai are "Hmong Leng" (*Hmoob Lees*) because they both used to wear colored skirts while alive. (Like the White Hmong, upon death the Hmong Tsai wear a white skirt so that their relatives will recognize them in the other world.) The term Hmong Leng is felt to be insulting as it derives from the Laotian term *Meo Laj*, colored Hmong.

The Hmong "Tsai" (*Tsaij*, called also *Quag Npab*), or Striped Hmong, originally came from the Wen Shan area of Yunnan. Tsai means "striped" in Hmong and "multicolored" in Chinese. It refers to the striped sleeves of their traditional costumes. Montan Hmong say that the Hmong Tsai are simply a branch of White Hmong because they speak essentially the same dialect. They differ, however, in costume, in the use of some terms, and in the quick rhythms of their songs (like Rock and Roll).

There is another possible explanation for the origin of Hmong Tsai. Chinese sources mention a noble house of Ts'ai during the period of Warring States (481-221 B.C.) which, when defeated by Ch'u, fled south and became Miao.<sup>8</sup> Are the Hmong Tsai ultimately related to this ancient, noble house?

It is not certain whether any Black Hmong live in the United States. In China, the Black Hmong are an important group. They wear chocolate-colored costumes.<sup>9</sup> There are also people called Black Hmong (*Hmoob Dub*) in Laos who wear clothes much like the Striped Hmong without striped sleeves, all black, with many colored sashes. Lemoine says these speak a distinct language and are possibly Hmu<sup>10</sup> (a group of Austro-Asiatic speakers, or one of the other Miao speaking groups).

In pre-1960 days the Green Hmong in eastern Laos lived in separate villages. They did not generally intermarry with White Hmong. They also had trouble understanding each other but now, they say, they have learned to make the necessary allowances for differences in pronunciation and have little problem communicating. These changes occurred in the refugee camps where the women delightedly borrowed each other's embroidery patterns and tried on each other's costumes.

Variations in costume between groups are culturally interesting, but the Montana Hmong do not like to see differences among themselves emphasized. This emphasis on group solidarity is traditional. Those who are at variance with the majority are encouraged to leave and live elsewhere.

The Hmong have a tradition of a Hmong kingdom with a written constitution and laws. Chinese histories make no mention of this and most investigators assume that the Hmong have always been illiterate. But the Hmong say that it was the Chinese who burned their ancient books and who threatened death for anyone who continued writing in the old script. Some Hmong women cleverly used the old script to write the ancient customs on their skirts, thereby preserving them from the watchful Chinese. They say this is the origin of the Green Hmong multicolored skirts.

The French colonial explorer, D'Ollone, reproduced a Hmong script in his work in which he was told that Hmong histories were written,<sup>11</sup> although he never saw the actual books. The Hmong were fearful that he would take them away and burn them as the Chinese, under order of the Ch'ien Lung Emperor (roughly a contemporary of George III), would have done. One of the Hmong in Montana remembers seeing a Chinese-like script in Laos and members of the Ly family say that their first ancestor in Laos could read and write Chinese.

New scripts were also invented by charismatic leaders but, as these were only known by the followers of the proclaimed leader, they were soon forgotten.<sup>12</sup> In these cases the scripts may have been more like charms. Even Vang Pao distributed charms to his troops to protect them in battle. The Hmong in Saiyaboury used a system of symbols to leave messages along the trail, composed of a series of notches, which could conceivably have inspired

the patterns on Green Hmong skirts.<sup>13</sup>

In their long history of ethnocide, small groups of Hmong were repeatedly forced to flee, leaving valuables behind. They buried these in caves or under rocks. (This is the source of all the gold and silver bowls and golden chopsticks the Monkey People in Hmong folk tales have in their possession.) In their wanderings they lost more than valuables. Hmong learned leaders were the first to be killed or taken captive. With them died reading and writing skills. People who knew the Hmong as swidden farmers on steep hillsides, as impoverished tenant farmers in pre-Communist China, or in refugee camps, often perceive them as primitive hill tribes awaiting the blessings of civilization. A more accurate view is that here are the remnants of a proud and vigorous people who believe their culture might well have become the culture of China, if they had not lost to the Han.

Barney talks of a great epic Poem, *The History of the Hmong*, which some old men know by heart and can recite in couplets on festive occasions.<sup>14</sup> Beauclaire also mentions listening to the Sheng Miao recite the exploits of the eighteen year war, commemorating the fighting during the T'ai-ping Rebellion (1851-1875 A.D.).<sup>15</sup> Sheng is the Chinese word for "raw," meaning "people who have not become sinified." Once they accept the blessings of Chinese civilization, they become "cooked" or shu. Here is a story based on memories of the eighteen year war as told and recorded by Xoua Lue Thao in a Thai refugee camp.

## HOW THE CHINESE DEFEATED THE HMONG AND WHY THE HMONG CAME TO LAOS

*Once upon a time there were two heros, Wang Hmong and Wang "Shoa" (Suav, the Hmong word meaning "Chinese"). They fought each other and there was war in China. No matter how large the Chinese armies, they could not defeat the Hmong. (The Hmong had greater supernatural power, or Mana, and this made them invincible.)*

*All the Chinese leaders came together and asked, "How can we defeat the Hmong?"*

*Now there was an old Chinese sage who advised Wang Shoa, "You, my son, cannot defeat the Hmong unless you pretend to submit to them first. After you have made peace, come back and tell me and I will tell you what to do."*

*The leader of the Chinese asked the sage, "But how are we to surrender to the Hmong?"*

*"You will never defeat the Hmong unless you take your standard and surrender it to them," the sage replied. "This will make the Hmong think that we have lost our power. They will be satisfied and lulled into a state of unawareness."*

*The Chinese did as the sage had told them. The Hmong were overjoyed and said, "Now let us become one nation. Let us all become brothers."*

*A few days later the leader of the Chinese went back to talk to the sage. He told him all*

that had happened. The sage accompanied him back to the Hmong leader. When they arrived, the old man fell on his knees and kowtowed as though coming into the presence of the emperor. The Hmong leader rushed to him saying, "Father, it is not you who should humble yourself before me, you are the older and wiser. It should be I who bows before you."

"Yes, that is true, I am older and wiser than you, but you are our Wang (the Chinese term for "king"). You are the caretaker of our country."

"That is true," said the Hmong leader.

Then the old sage learned how the Hmong strengthen their mysterious power through sacred words and sacrifices. He returned to the Chinese to teach them all he had learned.

To keep the Hmong off guard, the Chinese did everything for them. They brought them all kinds of animals, did the farm work and, in the process, converted the Hmong to Chinese ways. All this time the Chinese busily learned how to achieve greater supernatural power while the Hmong tended to abandon their old ways. Chinese children went to school and studied hard while Hmong children did not have to go to school and never learned to read and write.

Time passed and the leader of the Hmong died. His son became the leader in his place. The Chinese decided the time was ripe to rise up against the Hmong. They wrote a declaration of war and sent it to the new Hmong leader. When the leader received this, he called a council.

"What are we to do to defeat the rebelling Chinese?"

"Half of us must collect bamboo and make crossbows; the others must go into the mountains to prepare poison," was the consensus of opinion.

So the Hmong prepared crossbows and poisoned arrows. Once these were ready, they came together again to decide where best to meet the enemy. Some suggested taking position on an impregnable mountain. Others pointed out that the Chinese could then surround them there and starve them out. Finally they decided to meet the Chinese in a large, level valley with but a low hill in the center surmounted by a great tree. They surrounded the hill with nine rows of huge rocks and took up their positions under the tree. The leader directed the fighting from a seat on a branch in the tree itself.

When the Chinese armies tried to charge the Hmong positions, the Hmong rolled the rocks on them and shot them with their poisoned arrows. The only weapons the Chinese had were swords. Fighting raged for three days and two nights. Many Chinese lay dead, but one Chinese had managed to wrest a crossbow with poison arrows from a Hmong. He lay down among the dead Chinese and pretended to be dead also. Seeing that most of their comrades had been slain, the Chinese fled in disarray. The Hmong leader, thinking that all of the Chinese were now defeated, got down from the tree and stepped out from under the cover of the great tree. At that moment, the Chinese soldier who had only pretended to be dead aimed his crossbow and shot the Hmong leader. Seeing their leader dead threw the Hmong into confusion.

"Our leader is dead. How can we pursue the Chinese and defeat them now?" they asked.

As the Hmong talked back and forth, trying to devise a plan, the Chinese soldier who had shot the leader slipped away to the Chinese forces, shouting, "Hurry up and come back! I

*have killed the leader of the Hmong."*

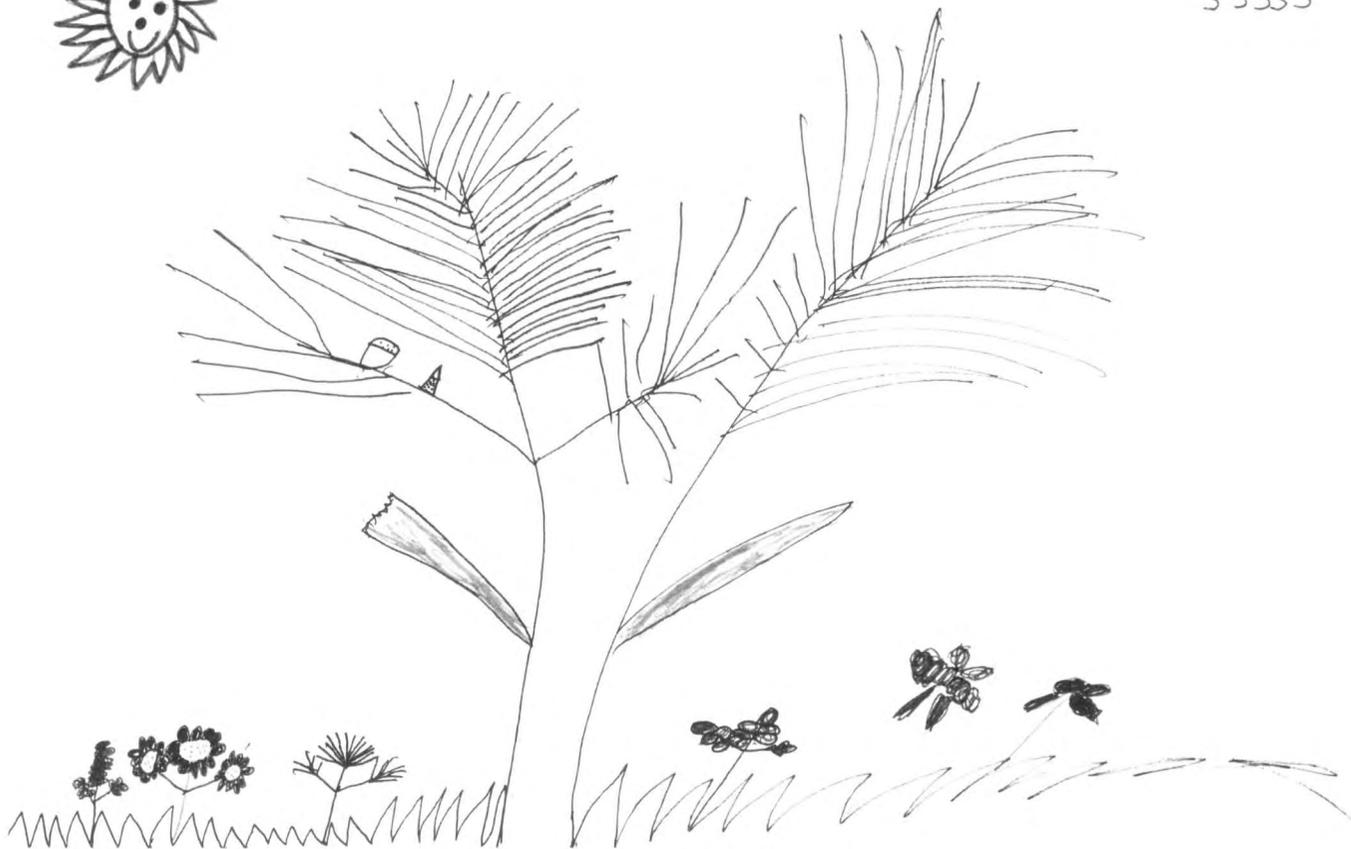
*All the Chinese who had not yet run away hurried back. They quickly regrouped and surrounded the Hmong. The Hmong surrendered. Then the Chinese tied their hands behind their backs and cut off their heads with their swords. All the Hmong soldiers were killed.*

*The other Hmong fled in all directions seeking safety in the forests and mountains. They continued to fight for many years but, however hard they fought, they could not defeat the Chinese who pursued them everywhere. Some Hmong fled south to Tonkin, Laos, Thailand and Burma. This is all about the war of the Hmong with the Chinese.*



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## II Outside the House

In the northern provinces of Laos the forests generally form a continuous top tier of trees reaching to 110 feet. Below is a second story of trees. Beneath these is another ecosystem of orchids, ferns, and vines. In the general area of the Plain of Jars the land is partially open pine forest with much rich grassland, dotted with wild fruit trees and berry bushes. It is mostly this latter type of country that the parents and grandparents of the Montana Hmong farmed. Those near Xieng Khouang city cultivated irrigated rice in fairly level fields while those living further north cultivated fields too steep to plough. They burned off the vegetation and planted dry rice and corn in the ashes via a digging stick with a footrest. Wherever feasible, they developed irrigation systems of bamboo pipe. The Hmong cultivated two types of rice, one maturing before the other. Thus they observed two thanksgiving feasts, one in early autumn and the other at the new moon near our Christmastime, called the Hmong New Year celebration.

The private part of the New Year celebration consisted of cutting a small tree in the forest and bringing it to the house. A rope plaited of reeds was attached to the tree and held by a member of the house or tied to a rock. This ceremony was conducted by all lineage members together or by each household separately. The members walked around the tree three times in one direction, then four times in the other to confuse the spirits. Sometimes they wore bracelets of plaited reeds. If a house member could not be present, another carried out the ceremony for him by carrying a piece of his clothing.

The head of the household or lineage sacrificed a chicken while reciting a special chant, asking that all the evil and ill fortune of the family be transferred to the tree. The feet of the chicken were then examined to see if the ceremony was successful. The tree was taken down, the rope and bracelets were wrapped with three bunches of red, white, and green paper, and hidden in an inaccessible place. Now the family was cleansed of all evil to start the new year.

Following this, the fun began. There were horse exhibits at which the horses wore hundreds of small silver bells on their harnesses. Bull fights were staged where the strongest bulls locked horns with each other. (Our idea of man pitting his strength and skill against a beast is foreign to Hmong culture.) Pigs were killed and, after duly inviting the ancestors (both ancestral mothers and fathers) to partake, the rest of the company washed down the rich food with "mountain dew."

Young men from neighboring villages came by to play the ball game with the marriageable girls, a courting game of great antiquity in which the girls of one "tseng" (*xeem*) or name group, played against boys from another. They

threw balls at one another. The one who missed had to sing songs or pay a forfeit, which was later redeemed. Elaborate embroidered costumes were made especially to impress the visiting boys at New Year's time. They were not worn for everyday.

Married women busily prepared food. Montana Hmong women wistfully recall that they were generally too busy and missed out on the fun.

The Hmong also raised many domesticated animals, i.e., chickens, pigs, horses and cattle, but their fields were generally too steep and too far from the farmhouse to be fertilized with animal manure. Swidden farming forced them to burn new fields when the land became exhausted after two to three years, thereby spreading the fields ever further from the home village. They tried to retain the home village as long as possible before packing up and moving to a new location.

The grandparent generation continued to live in the original village, tending vegetable gardens, fruit trees, and looking after the cattle which were allowed to graze freely. The cattle were never milked; the Hmong considered it disgusting to drink animal milk. In that cattle were not used as draught animals, their main use was for meat and to be sacrificed at great memorial feasts to the dead.

Other members of the extended family often lived in outlying farms, cultivating cereal fields. They returned to the home village at New Year's. Men and women worked together on the steep, communal fields. Some men also tended individually-owned fields as cash crops. Weeds and spent vegetation were laboriously spaded under. This allowed these fields to be used for many years. An admired young man was one who could trade his private crops successfully to generate much silver money so as to make a handsome gift to prospective in-laws.

Not all families were related in a typical village, but they all worshipped the same spirit of the place living in a big tree or rock. The leader of the first family to arrive at the new village site established contact with this spirit and, thereby, became the intermediary between the spirit and all the villagers. In this sense he was the village head man. In actuality he had little real power over the other families in the village. Under French colonial rule, village chiefs were elected. This often resulted in the senior member of the first lineage to be selected; however, a villager could sometimes terrorize others into electing him, as in the following Tiger Story. (The Hmong tell many tiger stories; so many, that it can be assumed there used to be a tiger cult.)

## TIGER STORY

*There were three brothers who saw a huge water buffalo feeding on the other side of the river. One of the brothers said, "If you will put this basket on my head (baskets often seem to have magic qualities; other stories tell of large rice winnowing baskets being*



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used as wings to enable a man to fly) <sup>16</sup> *I will go over there and fetch the water buffalo for you, but you must promise to get the basket off again later.*"

*The brothers promised and placed the basket on their brother's head. He promptly changed into a mighty tiger, easily swam across the river, grabbed the buffalo, and dragged it back to the two waiting brothers. Try as they may, the two brothers could not get the basket off the third brother's head. He remained a tiger.*

*Now, one of the brothers wanted to become the head man of the village, but he was not popular. He called the name of his tiger brother, which the tiger could hear no matter how far away he might be. Other people never dared say the name for fear that he would appear at once and kill them.*

*"Brother, help me to become head man," he said.*

*So the tiger tyrannized the villagers until they made the tiger's brother head man. This tiger still would be terrorizing the countryside had he not forgotten himself once when baby-sitting his brother's children and eaten one. Then the other brothers killed him with a silver bullet.*

Keenly aware of their natural surrounding the Hmong created stories about spectacular rocks and cliffs, sometimes giving natural objects spiritual qualities. Villages were named after some distinguishing feature in the vicinity. When Hmong men explain stories or customs, they often draw maps to illustrate points although they have no known tradition of representational graphic art.

The Hmong developed superb senses of direction. Moua Xong told of how, when he was very young, he went once into the jungle with someone older. After that, he went alone and never got lost. "We use the mountains, or a creek, or a certain tree to tell us where we are. I get lost in the city, but never in the jungle."

The men love hunting in Montana and baffle American companions with their uncanny ability to explore huge wilderness areas without getting lost. Boys share this love of hunting. In Laos, boys went alone to the forest to shoot peafowl and snare small animals for food. Montana boys often play hunting games using two rifles or sticks.

The Hmong are very observant of plants but they show little interest in naming and observing the habits of birds and animals. The rooster, crow and magpie figure in their stories. Souls often take the shape of insects, particularly butterflies. It is said that the souls of White Hmong become white butterflies, those of Green Hmong turn to shimmering blue ones, and the Striped Hmong souls are big swallowtails.

Many of our house plants, familiar to the Hmong, originally came from Southeast Asia. They use the Beefsteak plant (*Iresine herbsti*) as their blue dyestuff, steeping it for several days in large vats of water and slackening it with lime. Wandering Jew (*Tradescantis blossfieldiana*) is said to be good for diarrhea in babies. Cardamon roots are used as a tonic, although the fruit is not

used as a spice. Snake plant (*Sansevieria*) is good for burns and snakebite. Dieffenbackia, although recognized as very poisonous, is good for swelling when used as a poultice. Fatsia Japonica is good on diaper rash. Reddish Dressina dissolves blood clots. There are also wild plants which, when eaten, assure the birth of a son, increase fertility, or cause abortions. Many older women have collected herb remedies to use when members of their families became ill or had accidents on isolated hill farms.

### III Inside the House

Hmong homes, constructed of thick, hand sawed planks of wood, generally lasted thirty to forty years. They had beaten earth floors, kept neat by a twice-daily sweeping with a Hmong broom, such as the one on display. Hmong homes in Laos were noted as tidy inside. This is certainly characteristic of Montana Hmong homes.

The roof of the house was supported by posts of ritual importance (explained later). The main door was also considered sacred and required offerings, as did the two fireplaces. One fireplace was used for family cooking, the other for cooking pig food—corn and Sultana Impatiens, the same plants we buy at the nursery which grow abundantly wild in Laos.

When a large house began to sag, good wood was salvaged and a new site located. Houses were arranged in no apparent village order. It was, however, important that the main door (White Hmong houses had two doors, Green Hmong houses but one), look toward the saddle between two mountain peaks so that good fortune could flow freely to the family. Before a house was built, grains of rice were placed in small holes where the corners of the house would be and an egg was put at the site of the future hearth. If the grains remained undisturbed overnight, no spirit objected and house building began. House-raising was a community project, with all villagers pitching in to help.

When asked their name, Montana Hmong tell their given name and their "tseng" (*xeem*) name in no particular order. This is a recent custom. In traditional times they would simply have said their given name. If there were several people with the same name in a village, they were differentiated by adding older, middle, and younger.

Children are given a name at birth by either the mother or the father. There seems to be no prescribed method of deciding upon a name. Girls are often called "flowery," or they may be called "Mai." Sometimes they are called after a precious gift which the mother received during pregnancy. (Mai Kao's mother had been given an elephant tusk called Kao.) Boys are given aggressive names such as "dagger," or "victor." Sometimes sickly children are given new, "strong" names, such as "rock," "gold," or "silver."

Once a name is decided upon, it must be announced to the spirit of the house residing in the main post or door. All houses must have this central post even if it is not needed to support the roof. (Many Montana Hmong live in trailer houses; it does not make sense to them to observe this ceremony.)

The ceremony itself consists of saying special words over water and yellow beeswax, or three joss sticks are placed in a bowl of rice kernels and offered

with hard-boiled eggs or a hen. Hmong can divine from the yolk of a hard-boiled egg, from the position of the toes in chicken feet, or from the tongue of a sacrificed fowl.

The Hmong term "tseng" (*xeem*) is probably the archaic Chinese term *tseng fu*, or the large surname grouping now called a *tsu* by the Chinese. It is usually translated as "clan" in the literature. A child at birth becomes a member of his father's *tseng* and remains one throughout life. A woman retains membership in her own *tseng* and, in a sense, becomes a member of her husband's *tseng*. Women put *Nia*, mother, in front of their husband's name and oldest child's name. In Laos, for instance, Shoa Thao was called *Nia Pa Vu*, wife of *Pa Vu*. She was not called by her girlhood name until she came to Montana, where she was asked for her first name.

The *tseng* name bestows a special, mysterious power on all those who are born to it. All those who carry the same *tseng* name may not marry each other, even if they cannot trace any real kinship. All *tseng* members, regardless of what Hmong group they may come from (there are Green Hmong Vangs, just as there are White Hmong Vangs), talk of one another to Americans as cousins. When a young man travels to different villages at New Year's time to look over the available pretty girls, he knows that he can always find food and shelter in the house of a fellow *tseng* member. A wife far from home can turn to her own *tseng* members for help with her in-laws.

Hospitality is such an important Hmong value that no one should have had trouble finding a place to eat. People who lived near busy paths always made sure they had lots of food to feed guests and all comers were invited to a meal. The Montana Hmong are continuing this tradition. They invited five hundred guests to dinner at their New Year's celebration in Missoula in 1977.

The Hmong point out that, unlike Lao society, they are egalitarian. There are no aristocrats and no commoners, but in Laos there were some Hmong families who were more equal than others. These lineages belong to the Lo, Ly, Vang, Mua, Yang and Xiong *xeem*, precisely the names represented in Montana.

Unless the folk tales Hmong tell are in fact cycles of tales about the ancestors of different *xeem*, as suggested by Barney,<sup>11</sup> but not corroborated by the Montana Hmong, there seem to be no separate *xeem* origin tales. According to Lemoine, the origin of all the *xeem* is told in the following story which was translated to preserve the Hmong meter by Samuel Clarke.

After a flood in which all pre-people, the little people, perish, only a brother and sister survive . . .

Zie demanded his sister in marriage,  
His sister spoke,  
Spoke how?  
Thus by rote I sing,  
Still don't understand.

Then his sister spoke,  
You want to marry your sister;  
Lift up a millstone each opposite,  
Let go to roll to the valley;  
[If] they roll and make one,  
You marry your sister.  
If the stones rest apart in the valley,  
[We] both go and rest in our own place.  
So his sister spoke,  
Spoke words thus,  
    Why don't you understand?

Let the stones go into the valley;  
Did the stones then make one [or]  
Did the stones rest apart?  
    I who sing don't know.

The stones rested apart.  
Zie contrived wickedly,  
Put stones in the valley,  
Called his sister to come  
To see the stones become one.  
A-Zie then spoke,  
Now we two will marry,  
Spoke words thus,  
    Why don't you understand?

His sister again spoke,  
Take knives each on a separate hill,  
Throw the knives into the valley;  
[If they] enter into one sheath,  
We two will marry.  
[If] the knives rest apart,  
We will rest apart.  
So his sister spoke,  
Spoke words thus,  
    Why don't you understand?

A-Zie then hit on a plan,  
He made his heart wicked,  
Made two pairs of knives,  
He placed knives in the valley,  
[They] rested apart.

Threw and went into the grass,  
[He] called his sister to come  
To see the two knives in a pair.  
Now we two will marry,  
He would have his sister for wife,  
    Why don't you understand?

So the two returned home,  
And asked their Mother,  
Their Mother then said,  
Heaven has no people,  
Earth has no people,  
You two must marry.  
Kill buffaloes, kill cows, receive guests,  
Hang meat on the branches of the "Zan" tree,  
Call your brother cousin,  
Hang meat on the branches of the "Ma sang" tree,  
Call your Mother mother-in-law,  
So their mother spoke,  
Spoke words thus,  
And the two got married.  
    Why don't you understand?

So the two got married,  
Afterwards they had a child,  
Had a child, what sort?  
    Thus by rote I sing,  
    Still don't understand.

Zie saw and did not love it,  
Zie saw and Zie got angry,  
    Why don't you understand?

A-Zie was full of anger,  
Zie drew out a great knife,  
Took the child and chopped it up,  
    Why don't you understand?

Zie took the child and chopped it up,  
Where did he throw [the pieces]?  
Flesh went and got a name,  
What did they become and what were they called?

He sowed them on the hill,  
In the morning they became people,  
Thus they got a name,  
What they became so they were called,  
Why don't you understand?

A person is also a member of a named lineage, derived from the name of the original known ancestor. Each lineage has its own stories and traditions. At funeral and memorial ceremonies different lineages follow their own rituals and use a different number of bowls in which the sacrificial meat is presented to the ancestors. (The Hmong seem to have a variety of sacred numbers—three and nine are often referred to; seven and thirteen seem to be other special numbers.) Women can join their husband's lineage although they do not use the lineage name. When a family calls its ancestors to participate at a feast, dead mothers are called, along with dead fathers, forming one unit.

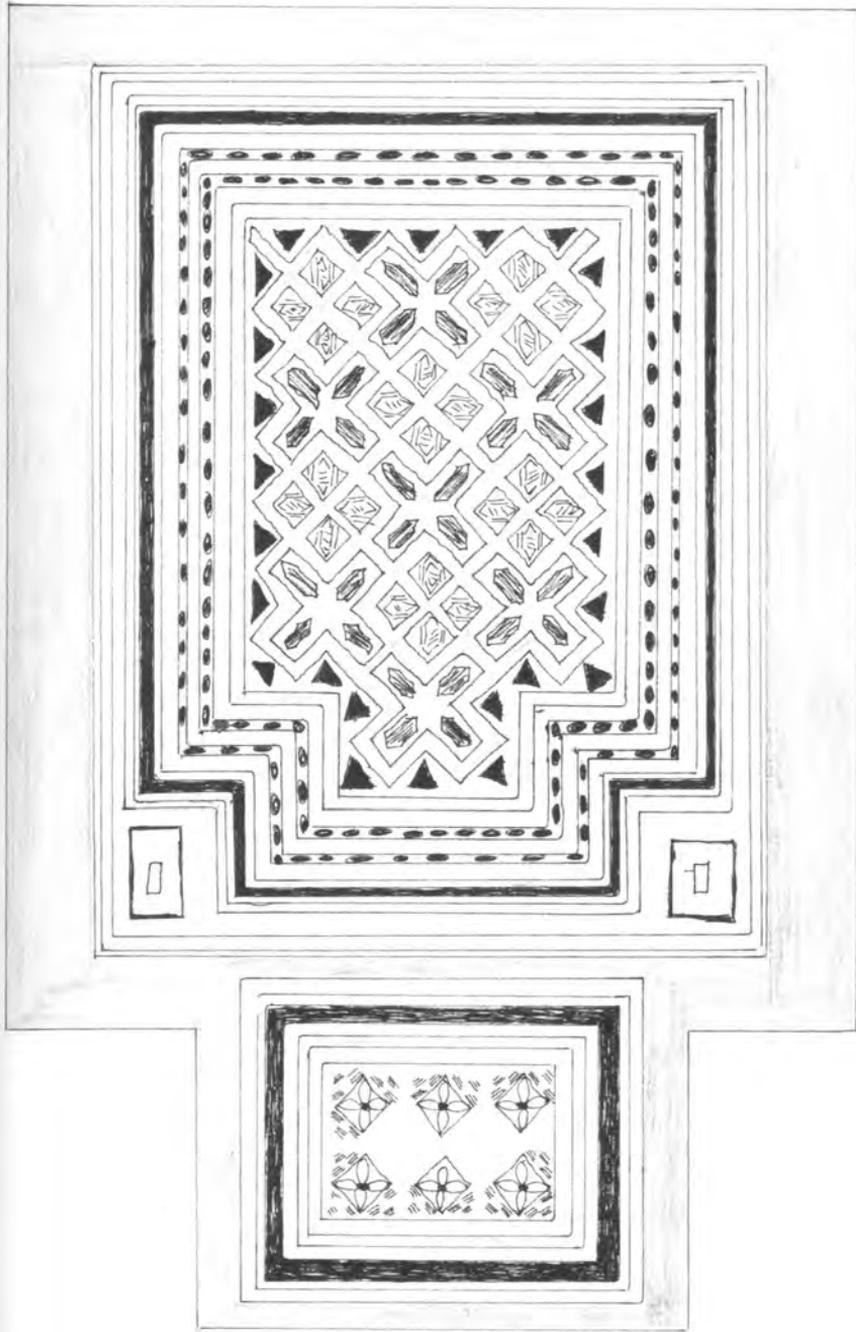
When a man becomes a weighty member of his community, after he has fathered sons, he takes an "old name." To do this, he invites all his neighbors, relatives, and wife's family to a great feast where different names are proposed. The agreed name becomes the "old name" and he is thenceforth known by it. Of course, he first notifies the spirits of house and place.

The Hmong concept of family does not coincide with American ideas. A boy calls all his father's brothers "father" and all his grandfather's brothers "grandfather." A close relationship exists between a person and his mother's brother and father's sister. One can count on them to give gifts of silver at weddings. Cross cousins often marry each other. To Hmong, our idea of the isolated, nuclear family is absurd.

Officially, Hmong families are patriarchal. Age is venerated but, despite the emphasis on seniority, it is the youngest who tends to inherit and who, as in many of Grimm's Fairy Tales, is the hero of their stories. Sons count for more than daughters because daughters move away when they marry.

Women defer to their husbands in public and let the men do the talking to an outsider. In their homes, Montana Hmong men and women appear to relate much as do American couples—a warm and friendly feeling prevails. Some wives obviously enjoy teasing their husbands.

Men could marry several wives in Laos and some Hmong men did. Too, should a woman's husband die, she may marry her deceased husband's brother or, at least, her husband's brother feels responsible for her children and tries to treat them like his own. If a man wanted peace in his house, he had to be absolutely fair as the women all lived together in the same house. Some Hmong told us that mothers in such homes sometimes had difficulties, but that all the children were very close to one another.



## IV *Marriage and Children*

Getting married is the order of the day for Hmong young people—and they do surprisingly early! Age fourteen is not uncommon for girls. This does not pose the problem that it would in our society. The young couple lives under the aegis of parents until they are older and the man has his “old name.” The new bride should take over the cooking chores from the oldest daughter but, in Montana, young wives appear to have much freedom. They may continue their education and, if they have young children, a mother-in-law or even the husband is left in charge to baby-sit. Montana Hmong men are affectionate toward their little children. Fathers often take over the feeding of toddlers; they can be seen at social gatherings giving the baby a bottle.

Hmong marriages could be arranged by parents but young people often took matters into their own hands and eloped. Of course, the girl pretended that the boy forced her to run away. That was only good form. The young couple then lived together at the boy's house for three days. The girl's parents did not worry when messengers arrived bearing gifts from the boy.

After the three days the girl returned home to weather the storm. Negotiations began in earnest as the two families looked each other over. Gifts were presented by the prospective groom to members of the bride's family. It increased his prestige if he could be generous and if the silver bars he gave were his own, not his father's. The groom then, as now, defrayed the cost of the wedding feast. The bride received rich clothes and silver jewelry from her family. The groom's family assumed the responsibility for household effects.

There are three parts to the actual marriage ceremony. First, each family chooses an elder as spokesman. The two elders compete with one another, often in verse, admonishing the two families in correct behavior. The elder representing the girl's family may order the groom to stay faithful to his wife “for as long as it takes this pig you are consuming to grow back together and run off into the forest!” The next part consists of the groom thanking his wife's relatives for allowing him to marry her. The final part comes when he introduces his bride to his ancestors.

Montana Hmong have left behind much of their Laos ceremonial life, but they still celebrate weddings in the old style. The following describes that part of the wedding celebrated at the home of the bride. This generally gets under way about noon after the women have spent all morning preparing large quantities of food: dry and sticky rice, chicken marinated in a special sauce, a variation on Chinese “spring rolls,” fish sauce, spicy herbs, cucumbers (but not tomatoes), leaf lettuce, and beef tripe if it is not taboo (food taboos are observed

by some *xeem*: Vangs cannot eat fruit and rice together because of a snake demon which will molest them if they do; the Xiongs, some say the Yangs, cannot eat the heart of an animal; Lys cannot eat tripe). Hmong women are excellent cooks and very adept at cutting and chopping.

The guests gather at noon. Shortly afterward, the young people enter. The bride wears the traditional costume of her family which, in the past, she began to prepare when but a little girl. This was previously worn at New Year's when flirting with the boys. Hmong men gave up wearing their costume once they came into close contact with the outside world. At weddings they generally wear a black silk vest with Chinese frog buttons, a shocking pink sash, and the same kind of heavy silver necklace as the bride. Barney says that the bride and groom exchange necklaces, although the Hmong assured us they had not seen this done. However, at one wedding the eldest male relative placed a small golden chain about the groom's neck.

Once order is established with the children shooed into the kitchen and the guests lined along the walls, the groom and his best man rhythmically kneel to each member of the bride's family, saying, "Thank you for letting me marry your sister/daughter." This can go on and on as there are many members to what constitutes a Hmong family and no one wishes to be overlooked.

The bride and groom then step to the head of the room where two older men stand on either side who commence a chant in an archaic form of Hmong. The father-in-law ties white strings around the couple's wrists and a string around a hard-boiled egg so as to cut it neatly in half. The young couple, who has been fasting, eat the egg and wash it down with a tumbler of whiskey. Relatives line up with fruit, chicken, and cookies, gifts to the bride and groom, as they tie strings about their wrists and wish them the best.

The bride and groom are toasted many times. The groom must drink each toast (or find some inconspicuous way to avoid doing so). At the conclusion of the festivities the groom is generally quite intoxicated, but this does not constitute bad manners. The father-in-law may merely comment, "I'll have to teach that new son of mine to hold his liquor." Hmong, however, do not usually drink unless it is for some ceremonial occasion and then they drink whiskey.

Wedding presents, wrapped in no apparent ceremonial color as they would be in China, are not opened before the guests, but are piled onto the table until it is time to eat. The honored guests are invited to eat at the head table (the bride and groom do not sit with the guests). Food is served and the father-in-law encourages the guests to eat. He must not eat after the guests have finished, nor should he cease before they do (this would make them seem greedy).<sup>10</sup> When the guests are through, the women enter to quickly clear the table and clean up. The party is over.

In Laos, Hmong families had many children. A woman had her first baby about the age of sixteen. They continued to have babies up to menopause with no stigma attached to a mother who had a baby at the same time as her

daughter. One reason for large families might have been the high infant mortality rate. Vang Pao's mother had twenty children. Only ten survived infancy. "She has never shed a tear," Vang Pao told us, "because her own mother told her that crying harms the eyes. She has better eyes than I have."

Before a woman became pregnant, she or her husband dreamed that a snake bit them. Dreams are very important to the Hmong since they foretell the future. Receiving money or other valuables in a dream means "plenty of trouble" from which it is often difficult to shield oneself, even if one stays home and avoids all dangers. At the birth of the child, the husband traditionally assisted the wife during delivery and cut the umbilical cord. Even in Montana the husband tries to stay at the hospital until his wife can safely come home with the baby.

To keep their bodies strong (now and in old age) new and expectant mothers avoid drinking cold things. They eat chicken and rice prepared with healthful herbs. In recent times, women have begun to feed cow's milk to their babies because it is convenient and because they believe that nursing makes a woman age prematurely. In the past, Hmong women worked terribly hard. A woman of forty-five was considered old. Women nursed babies for years, until a new one came along. The Montana Hmong agree with Chindarsi<sup>12</sup> that it is a sin for a woman to give milk to another baby than the one she is nursing. A breach of this taboo will result in lightning striking her dead.

Small babies are constantly in close contact with another person, either on the mother's back or tied to the back of an older sibling with a baby carrier. The White Hmong say they learned to decorate baby carriers from the Green Hmong. The design of some of those on display is based on a batiked pattern cloth.

The relationship between the older brother and the baby on his back is often close, with the older brother becoming a guide and mentor as long as he lives. Like all children, Hmong youngsters preferred to play without a baby on their backs and tried to sneak away. They were spanked when caught. Too, boys were severely beaten at times by the same fathers who later told them stories in the evenings. To the Hmong way of thinking, slapping children is a form of cuddling them; it also seems to be a form of toughening them.

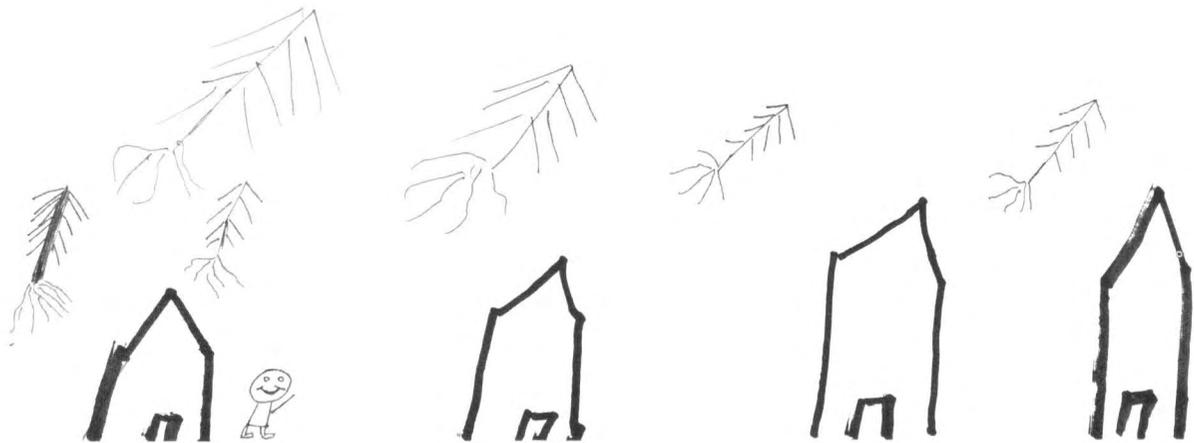
Hmong children are allowed to be very active. When the commotion becomes too great, some parents whistle at the offenders through closed teeth to be quiet, with mixed results. Young girls, although they must do the cooking, are given as much free time as possible by their mothers in order to embroider and to flirt with boys.

Parents want their children to be self-reliant. By the age of two, Hmong children may be left at the grandparent's house to play with other children who are running about with little supervision. A Montana Hmong recalls being left alone all day at the age of three, to fend for himself until his mother and older brothers returned in the evening. Children as young as nine or ten years were

left alone to manage the animals in outlying farms, with only a dog to protect them from prowling animals and the other things that "go bump" in the night. The protective dogs were never let in the house or given personal names.

Children were ingenious at making their own toys. Girls made dolls out of sticks and dressed them in clothes. They also made dollhouses for them. Boys played with tops and crossbows that were usually made for them by an older relative. Montana boys often play hunting games with toy rifles and sticks. The boys are tough and agile. They enjoy soccer and running games. It is not unusual, however, to see a young man pick up a toddler and entertain him during a break in the game. When small, boys and girls played and still play together; when older, girls and boys of the same tseng name avoid each other.

Kong me ng



## V The Supernatural

When illness proved unresponsive to herbal medicines, soul loss was suspected. Like other peoples of East Asia, the Hmong believe in multiple souls. The Hmong in Montana have told us they think there may be about three (the main soul is located in the head). Souls are fickle; they may leave a person to wander about. Sometimes they may lose their way and not come back, or an evil spirit might snatch one. Sometimes one may be enticed into the land of the dead by lonely relatives who miss the living. Hmong children and old people wear necklaces of silver to help anchor the restless soul. Small children may also wear anklets with bells. Vang Pao's old mother does not allow her picture to be taken; she fears her soul might mistake the picture for her. Other Montana Hmong, however, enjoy having their pictures taken; they own thick albums of photographs of friends in Laos.

According to Moréchand,<sup>22</sup> the Hmong soul likes beautiful clothes. It is more likely to stay put if a person is beautifully attired.

When a baby screams and nothing seems to help, the mother assumes this is because the baby's soul has drifted away. Generally, calling the child's name outside the house in all directions will make it return. If this does not help, or if the infant or person is seriously ill, in the past the family would call in a specialist.

There are three kinds of specialists in things supernatural: a rare wise man or oracle (like the Chinese sage in the story about the defeat of the Hmong), an exorcist priest, and a shaman. The exorcist priest is an elder who has learned a number of magical chants during a period of apprenticeship. He is not a full time specialist, although saying the chants so increases his natural, mysterious power that he can pick up red-hot iron with bare hands, place molten metal on his head, or walk on sharp knife blades without harm. His mysterious power is great enough that he can wrestle with evil demons to expel them from the sick person. To tell if the exorcist priest is succeeding in this battle, an egg is balanced on the rim of a bowl. If it stands upright, the demon is in full command; when it falls, the demon has been vanquished. Magical words seem to be essential. This is true in other instances as well, i.e., in order to be a good smith (and all good exorcist priests are also smiths) one must know the correct words. The task then is as good as done.

The shaman can go into a trance and, as the Hmong say, "travel." In the course of his trance he recounts his adventures and the progress of his journey. Accompanied by his heavenly troops on horseback, he charges off to capture lost souls.

A shaman is a person who may have suffered from mental illness, which he or she has overcome by learning to control the spirit which possessed the body and caused the illness. Hmong shamans place a cloth over the face when they go into a trance, and rhythmically shake metal disks on a ring. (The Hmong shaman is similar to the shaman of the Steppe people of Central Asia and of the Eskimo.) Climbing the axis of the universe, the shaman's tree, he searches for lost souls on all the different levels or worlds. Hmong shamans and priests resemble Chinese popular Taoist practitioners.

The Hmong believe in a Supreme Being in the heavens who is, however, far removed from man and his troubles. Hmong do not seem to be great metaphysical systems builders, nor are they much concerned with naming constellations and telling stories to explain the positions of the stars. There are, however, many spirits of dubious intentions inhabiting the environment. A divine force embodied in lightning may strike to revenge evil. For instance, several Montana Hmong have told us the following story:

A second wife was mean to the children of the first wife while the latter was at a different farm with the common husband. In despair, the children set out to find their parents. The baby died on the way. Later, when the second wife was confronted with the dead baby, she denied having been mean to the children. As she protested her innocence, a great flame shot from the heavens and killed her.

Hmong do not build temples or statues to saints or gods as the Chinese and Lao people. Their religious life remains more hidden and internalized. The house might be considered the Hmong temple since the spirit of the family is focused in the main post and door. In this context it is interesting that, when driving around Missoula with older Hmong women, they seem most interested in seeing large houses and commenting upon them. Where traditional Chinese generally feel that food, next clothes and, far to the end of the list, houses are desirable, the order seems different for the Hmong. Younger women have also said how much they dream of a big house. Neither does gourmet food appear to hold the center stage for the Hmong as it does for the Chinese. At a banquet, the food is not endlessly commented upon and compared with other gastronomical delights.

Religious life seems to reside in the power of the oral tradition. It may be significant that the Hmong are really not eager to write their own language. This was already noted by Clarke.<sup>23</sup> In Montana most Hmong are not really conversant with the new alphabet. Developing a Hmong-English dictionary is not a priority with them. They indicate that the Lao-English dictionary they have is sufficient. This may, of course, be due to the fact that they long to return to Laos.

A man who seeks spiritual comfort may turn either to magical chants and sacrifices or to his ancestors. It is a man's duty to take care of his father after death by preparing feasts for him and burning paper money. The other lineage

dead are also invited to attend, yet there seems to be some leeway about how one calls them to attend. It does not seem to be necessary to remember them by name past the parental generation. There is a connection between the ancestors and a small altar shelf, called a Flowery altar, on which a bowl of rice kernels and incense is placed. People here remember keeping one in their house in Laos but, as it must be prepared by a priest or shaman and none is available, they were unwilling to explain to us how it functioned.<sup>24</sup>

## VI Arts and Crafts

### MUSIC

Many cattle are sacrificed at the funerals of wealthy men, in part to accompany the dead to the land beyond, and in part to feed all the relatives who have come to mourn. The ceremonies are conducted by a priest, the same type of person called on for exorcising demons. One of his functions is to open the road for the dead. To further help the dead on his dangerous and fearful way, men play the six tube flute which the Chinese call a liu sheng and which the Hmong call "geng" (*geej*); the Lao is khene.

The geng is not the voice of the dead, but a means by which the living may pray to the dead and be heard by them. The geng speaks Hmong words. As a tonal language, Hmong lends itself to translation into drum beats and other musical notes. Hmong can blow on leaves so that it sounds like bird calls to us, but it can be understood in words by other Hmong. This allows for a dimension in instrumental music which Western music lacks.

Besides the geng, Hmong play a regular flute, a jointed flute, a mouth organ, and drums. The mouth organ, or Jew's harp, is used by lovers to talk to each other. Hmong also play a stringed instrument called an er hu in Chinese. The one on display comes from Montegnards in Vietnam.

The *geej* player is an expert who has to complete an apprenticeship. *Geej* playing often runs in families. *Geej* players are also dancers and acrobats. They dance as they play, sometimes around the coffin. *Geej* players sometimes are so skilled that they can make somersaults while playing or dance on stilts. *Geej* come in different sizes, thus allowing for orchestral effects. The *geej* is a very old instrument in Southeast Asia. The *geej* of the Hmong of western Kweichow and of Laos have tubes arranged horizontally, like those on display, while the *geej* of the Black Hmong of eastern Kweichow are vertical.<sup>25</sup>

Some *geej* instruments are huge, reaching seven feet in length. The *geej* is based on the principle of the free reed. This reed is either of peach wood or made from a piece of a broken brass drum. A stopper is inserted into the mouthpiece when not in use, so that spiders cannot make their home in it. Before playing, a *geej* must be soaked in water and carefully coated with wax.

The Montana Hmong have told us little about drums, except that they may only be used for funerals. From the literature, we gather that both hide drums and bronze drums have been important with other groups. Bernatzik<sup>26</sup> describes an old drum which was in the possession of a Hmong chieftain, now in the Voelkerlunde Museum in Vienna, on which *geej* players are illustrated. It is of a general type as that on display which was bought in Laos from the Lao.

## THE ORAL TRADITION

The Hmong love to sing. Some of the songs apparently have traditional words, others are made up for special events. Oral literature is clearly the most important art form. When talking to a Hmong for a short time, one hears many wonderful stories: historical, sad, funny, entertaining. The Hmong try to keep their stories accurate: they do not seem to vary them freely. Some Hmong have told us that storytelling times are deeply emotional events which move the audience to tears as they remember their own sorrows.

Many Hmong stories belong to cycles of tales which probably relate the adventures of ancestral heroes, although no one in Montana was able to tell us a complete cycle. It seems that certain old men are expert storytellers. Until such an old man comes to Montana and is willing to tell us his stories, the following short excerpt from the Orphan Nau Blaii cycle gives some idea of the nature of them. Graham<sup>27</sup> collected and published many stories from the Hmong living along the Sze-Ch'uan Yunnan border. From these it is gathered that the girl, Zie, originally did not wish to marry the orphan because of his poor clothes.

### NAU BLAII AND ZIE

told by Mua Cha

*Once upon a time there was a poor orphan boy. When all the other young people put on their clothes and went to play the ball game at New Year's, he went around in rags. None of the girls wanted to play with him. He went home, took down his geng which he played wonderfully well, and returned to where the young people were playing. He played and played beautifully and, as he played, he danced. Zie (this name refers to the youngest and most beautiful daughter) saw him and fell in love with him. She followed him home. He said, "Please go home. Your parents will never allow me to marry you."*

*When Zie went into his bedroom she found that he had a great many silver bowls, gold chopsticks and other treasures (which he had stolen from the Monkey People in an earlier episode).*

*He said, "All these things are mine, not yours."*

*Zie decided to stay with him but she did not become his real wife.*

*The orphan continued to play the geng. He played it so well that the dead souls in heaven heard him and longed to have him come up to heaven to play for them. One beautiful morning, with a brilliant blue sky and the sun shimmering on the mountain peaks, Zie stood outside his door. She saw two butterflies fall from the sky, tumbling over and over each other until they reached the place where she stood. And lo, they were two young men who said to her, "We want to take Nau Blaii up to heaven to play for us."*

*The orphan heard them and said, "How can I go to heaven?" I cannot fly!"*

*"The young men said, "That is easy. Just put your head under our armpits."*

*The girl did not want the orphan to go. The two young men finally convinced her that it*

would only be until tomorrow, when they would bring him back to earth. So Nau Blaii put his head under their armpits. One moment, he heard a sound as though scratching the palm thatch of the roof; the next, he stood in heaven.

He played his geng to the souls in heaven. One of the girls there fell in love with him. She would not let him go back to earth the next day. He tried to break away, but he could not. Every morning he tried to get away. Zie would hear the sound of the geng come closer and closer and then, instead of Nau Blaii appearing, the sound receded. Zie cried and cried. She longed for him so much. Zie decided to ask a wise sage for help. He told her to take a spoon and to hang it over the fireplace in the house. She should spin it around in her hands and said, "May the heat of this spoon burn my love into Nau Blaii's heart." But even though Nau Blaii in heaven was filled with a terrible longing for her, he could not get away from heaven, back to earth.

In despair, Zie went back to the wise old man and asked him what she should do. "Go up to heaven and bring him back yourself," was his advice.

In those times, before men had become too evil, there was a road up to heaven which has since been blocked. So Zie went up to heaven but, look as much as she may, she could not find the orphan Nau Blaii anywhere.

Again she returned to the wise man, who traveled freely between heaven and earth. He said, "Tomorrow morning stand by the highway. You will see many horsemen pass. Wait until you see a miserable horse pass, then rush out and grab the rider. It will be your love."

She went early next morning and waited and waited. At last she began to cry when she saw many horsemen ride by on fine, sleek horses. At the very end of the column a pitiful, dirty, small horse stumbled along. She remembered the wise man's words. She rushed out and grabbed the rider. It was, indeed, Nau Blaii. They went off together and talked and talked.

The heavenly girl who had fallen in love with Nau Blaii came by and said to Zie, "You cannot have him. I want to marry him." So the old men in heaven decided that the only thing to do was for the two girls to compete for Naj Blaii. They decided to have a contest to see who was the most beautiful. The heavenly girl changed her clothes three times a day, wearing ever more lovely costumes, but she still was not as lovely as Zie, his own true love. Finally Nau Blaii was permitted by the elders to marry Zie. Nau Blaii and Zie became married and returned to earth.

## JEWELRY AND WEAPONS

Two Hmong smiths live in the United States, one in Philadelphia and the other in the Los Angeles area. In Mua Cha's grandparental and parental generation there were many Hmong smiths. Smiths were also great exorcist priests. The smiths did farm work as did everyone else but, when the weather was bad, they set up a smithy in their homes. The essential tool for this was a bellows. This was made from a hollowed log with a piston wrapped with chicken feathers. It worked much like a bicycle pump. Once the fire was white hot, metal (which the Hmong obtained through trade) was melted and beaten into weapons, or it was spun into thin wire by passing it successively through ever smaller holes on



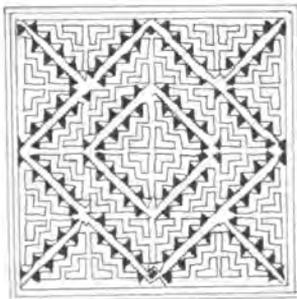
a metal plate which resembles a knitting needle gauge. With only an elementary pair of pliers and a few other tools, Mua Cha's father made the delicate earrings on display. The designs incised on the rings are called "fish eyes," but Mua Cha does not know why.

The Hmong in different areas of Laos have different necklaces. The multitiered silver necklace is of the Xieng Khouang-Houa Phanh area, while the Hmong to the west and south wore round neckbands. The horned plaques on the Xieng Khouang silver chains may be inscribed with symbols to denote the wearer's personal name, but this is done only when deemed necessary by a priest or shaman. What the origin or meaning of these plaques is, we were unable to determine. It is interesting that the much poorer Hmong in China visited by Graham did not have necklaces, but wore instead a front piece (like an apron bib) to cover the women's breasts.<sup>28</sup> Is the silver necklace a substitute for this older, embroidered breast cover of cloth?

The smith who made jewelry also made agricultural tools and weapons. Mua Cha remembers a great sword his grandfather kept under the bed. It was about three feet long with spurs along the blunt side (called chicken feet by the Hmong), and a metal chain soldered beneath. The sword, worn in a scabbard tied to the back, was drawn over the head and twirled through the air so that the chain made a fierce, rasping noise.

The flintlock guns on display were handmade by Hmong smiths. The barrel was made from an iron rod which was drilled with a red-hot drill bit attached to a bow.

The practice of enameling silver rings and bracelets seems to be a recent borrowing from the Lao or Thai.



## COSTUME

Each ethnic group in Laos has its own basic costume design which sets the group apart from all the others. The basic Hmong woman's dress consists of a turban, a fairly short jacket which closes in front, an apron or two, a full-pleated skirt and puttees wrapped around the calves (Hmong women used to be embarrassed to show bare legs). This basic dress formula varies among different Hmong groups according to hereditary affiliations and according to the region of Laos within which they live.

In addition to hereditary and area variables, Hmong costume is determined by the rule that the minority must adapt itself to the customs of the majority in dress or, as one Hmong put it, "If you are a gray pigeon and move in with black crows, you must change your feathers to black." The family which first took up residence in a new area and established good relations with the spirit of the place set the style for all those who came later, as long as they were of the same chia or tribe. In a given village area, for example, all White Hmong wear the same costume and probably use the same basic embroidery designs and patterns also. All Green Hmong still wear their peculiar batiked skirt and multicolored embroideries, but probably adopt the turban style of their White Hmong co-villagers.

Due to the interplay of three variables, hereditary membership in one of the Hmong chia or tribes, regional style preferences, and dominance of one particular lineage in a given area, the costumes of the Laotian Hmong are infinitely variable. In Montana the "old" White Hmong from Xieng Khouang of Vang Pao's lineage are clearly dominant at this time. At the 1977 New Year's banquet to which American friends were invited, almost all the women wore the traditional "old" Xieng Khouang White Hmong costume with but a few exceptions. Some women wore Green Hmong skirts because they were going to perform in folkloric entertainment; one woman wore the distinctive red turban of the "new" Hmong type. What the particular costume of a given area will be is decided by the women themselves, even though it gives visual reality to power alignments among the men.

A White Hmong girl from an old Hmong, *Hmoob Laug*, lineage wears a maroon turban on festive occasions. If she is unmarried she decorates the turban with a black and white stripe which was generally woven by the Black Thai. She also wears a short, black jacket edged in royal blue with royal blue cuffs and a sailor collar in back decorated with a double rectilinear design. Two black aprons are worn one in front with lime-green ties and the other in back with shocking pink ties which are elaborately embroidered in a white on lime-green applique or on a shocking pink background in Xieng Khouang.

In the past, she would have worn a plain white hemp skirt woven by the women on handlooms, then bleached by immersing the fabric in black mud. At some time and place during the Hmong's sojourn in Laos, the skirt was generally replaced by black trousers of an ingenious cut. The White Hmong of Xieng Khouang of a "new" lineage (a lineage whose ancestors came to Laos after the Tai-ping Rebellion, 1851-1875) wears the same general costume but substitutes a red-tasseled headdress for the maroon turban. Essential for festive attire is a heavy silver necklace.

The White Hmong of Saiyaboury province and the area near Louang Prabang, wear an apron edged in blue or aqua and different types of necklaces. They also use different embroidery patterns. In Saiyaboury, the old Hmong families wear a differently wrapped navy blue or black turban decorated with

red pompons for special occasions. The "new" Hmong costume on display comes from Saiyaboury. Near Vang Vieng some White Hmong wear a black turban tied a bit like a Salvation Army bonnet.<sup>29</sup> The Green Hmong and Striped Hmong also vary their costumes by area.

The Green Hmong woman in Montana who makes traditional skirts does not first batik the material to set the pattern. Instead, she divides the surface by sewing on colored ribbons, then arranges the applique triangles and Xs surrounded by cross-stitch. Young, unmarried Green Hmong girls also wear belts of cross-stitch embroidery richly fringed with beads and silver coins. Green Hmong women may also wear a beaded and coin-decorated turban.

As was mentioned earlier, the decorations on the Green Hmong skirt are said to derive from an ancient script. The uppermost band is said to tell of the constitution of the old Hmong kingdom, the second of social rules of behavior, and the last to list the laws. Clearly, the women did not know the script and, thus, felt free to vary the patterns to serve their aesthetic inclinations. The skirts give an overall pink impression, although the base color is blue-black (see cover) when from Xieng Khouang or Houa Phanh.

The Green Hmong of western Laos wear batiked and embroidered skirts which are predominantly blue in over-all color, not simply in the underlying batiked materials as is true of the Green Hmong skirts from Houa Phanh province. In some families old, entirely batiked hemp skirts are kept as heirlooms. They constitute part of the wedding gift to the bride from her family. The Green Hmong jackets are similar to those of the White Hmong, but are piped down the front in multiple colors, especially red and gold. They wear a sailor collar in back which they supposedly "stole" from the White Hmong. That is why, it is said, some Green Hmong groups wear their embroidery collars inside out. To see the patterns, one must lift the collar.

On festive occasions the costume of Striped Hmong women from the Sam Neua area is distinguished by a large, round turban decorated with embroidered, coin-fringed bands (see cover), wrapped around a bun of hair at the top of the head. This hair style was noted very early in Chinese history as peculiar to the "southern barbarians." Montana Hmong usually wear their hair as do Laotian women — in a ponytail pinned up with a barret.

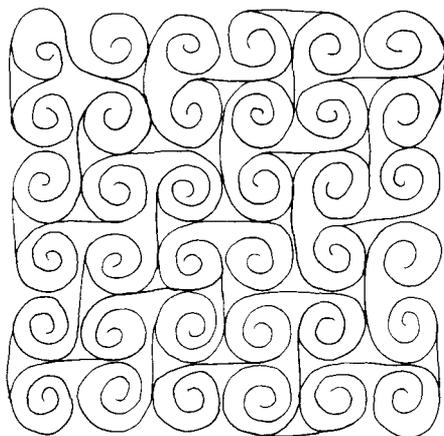
For everyday the Striped Hmong of the Sam Neua area wear a black head scarf, which they bought from the Black Thai who weave it with their own patterns and colors. These Striped Hmong wear a coin-decorated embroidered vest similar to that worn by their men on festive occasions, and the same necklace as that worn by the White Hmong of Xieng Khouang province. Under this they wear a jacket with narrow striped sleeves. These are said to symbolize tiger stripes as this particular group of Hmong feels a close relationship to that powerful beast. (One of the older Hmong Tsai ladies told us that, when buying a winter jacket, she looked for fake tiger fur in order to continue her group identification through costume.) Two aprons are worn, one

in front and one in back, with a wide blue stripe down the center. Several green, pink, and orange sashes are wound round the waist, often topped by a silver filigree belt.

Striped Hmong reside in other parts of Laos besides in the Sam Neua area. The Montana Hmong suggest that the Striped Hmong costume of the Sam Neua area may simply be an area variant of the White Hmong costume. Lemoine's work suggests otherwise,<sup>30</sup> as do pictures taken by Graham<sup>31</sup> which Pa Foua Ly identified as Striped Hmong.

Hmong people have long been known for their embroidery. Beginning at approximately age six, the women spent every free moment working on their art. They often worked in a group. The girl who made the finest stitches and invented the most interesting pattern variations was honored and emulated. Embroideries were made as gifts for friends and relatives. This still is done. Many fortunate Americans have received embroidered bags and cloths.

The Hmong use a variety of embroidery techniques, often in combination. The most unusual of these is the use of reverse applique wherein the design is created by the underlying material appearing through cuts in the applique cloth. To make these patterns, a woman first makes a grid pattern by running a needle along the warp and weft threads of the cloth. This is accomplished entirely by eye, sans ruler or other guide. Next, the pattern is cut, again without any aids. She bastes the top cloth onto the underlying cloth which, for the White Hmong here, should either be shocking pink or lime-green with a white top cloth. Holding the work on an upraised knee as she sits on a stool, the top cloth is sewn on with a buttonhole stitch or a simple over stitch. This is executed with great regularity and minuteness. When completed, small red and green crewelwork triangles are embroidered as a finishing touch. Other panels of the apron band may be decorated with chain stitch embroidery in a pattern of interlocking Js or spirals.



This pattern may be unique to the Vang Pao lineage. It is called "snails." Each Hmong pattern has its own name, often devised by the woman who invented the design. Most of the names cannot be translated, no more than our given names can be, i.e., Betty and Ruth. Some names, however, refer to the shape of the design: circle, rectangle, spiral, sea shell, earthworm, or square.

Moni Adams, working on Hmong costumes for the Textile Museum in Washington, D. C.,<sup>32</sup> writes that young girls are viewed as flowers and that the embroidery designs may reflect this. Hmong men, when asked, said that comparing girls to flowers is a Lao concept that is not originally theirs. They did agree that little girls often have names referring to flowers, but the flowers in question often refer to the cash crop they cultivated in Laos. Even though the White Hmong word for embroidery, *pajntaub*, means sewing flowers, could the embroidery designs themselves refer to money or wealth?

The festive costume is also the wedding dress. Essential to the wedding is the transfer of silver coins (in the past, cowrie shells and silver bars) to the girl's family by the groom. The bride's costume may symbolize wealth, that transferred at weddings and that of anticipated children. It is significant that having many children is one way a man may become the head of a large following of loyal supporters who can increase his real wealth with their labor. Wealth and leadership generally went together for the Hmong — a leader needs money in order to entertain. Cia Mua told us that having one hundred people for dinner at Vang Pao's house in Long Cheng was normal!

Money clearly does not mean the same thing to the Hmong as it does to members of the American consumer society. The Hmong tried to amass treasure in Laos, where the official coinage was generally in disarray. They dealt with two types: paper money for spending and silver. They did not spend the silver, but hid it in secret caches under rocks. Treasure is associated with venerating the ancestors, be it assuring a fitting funeral for the father or providing for the marriages of his descendants.<sup>33</sup>

Being in debt may constitute a real menace to the living, particularly should the person one is in debt to die. The dead person may put pressure on the living to repay the debt by being reborn as a sickly, deformed baby. To appease the dead lender, the family must hold a large, sacrificial memorial feast.

One of the most often expressed anxieties of the Montana Hmong is the need for a job, even when they seemingly have enough to live on. They all work terribly hard, and drive themselves to work even harder because they must have money which, it seems, equals security in this world *and* in the next.

Embroideries do not simply vary in design from group to group, but in colors as well. When asked what are the typical Hmong colors, women say that they are red and green. Do the Hmong observe the Chinese Yin and Yang oppositions between red — male, hot like the sun and dominant — and green-blue — female, cool like the moon and receptive? When asked, none said that red is the color for man as opposed to blue, the color for women. They do use

the Chinese term *yin* to designate the shady, more humid side of the mountain, which they say they prefer to the hot, dry, *yang* side. There may be a subtle identification for the Hmong as a group with the cool, green *yin* of the north as opposed to the flat, hot *yang* of the south.

Although they find Montana winters rough, many Montana Hmong have stated they cannot stand the heat; they prefer winter to summer. In their myths, the Hmong fought alongside the monster of the north to vanquish the south. They enjoy telling how their ancestors used to live in icy Siberia. Where there is a choice in the stories, as between the red-headed and green-headed dragon, it is the green-headed one which is the hero. Is this a symbolic way in which the Hmong set themselves apart from the very *yang* Chinese?

That the Hmong use the same "njua" (*ntsuab*) with qualifiers to indicate saturated green and blue has already been mentioned. Their term yellow also does not correspond to our usage. As in Chinese, the Hmong color yellow refers to a wide range of hues all the way from almost white to brown. Yellow also seems to be a color associated with the spirit world. It is expressly yellow wax which must be burned to route demons. Their frequent referral to the "Yellow River" over which their ancestors had to pass may refer less to the real Huang Ho of China than to the river that separates the living from the dead.

Today, in Montana, most Hmong young women have not learned to make the intricate embroideries their mothers know. Those who have tried discover that they simply do not have the necessary eye-hand control which only years of practice and early training can teach. The women in the refugee camps, on the other hand, find that there is nothing to do but embroider. Some have continued to make the large applique cloths which the Montana Hmong say were inspired by American tourists to Laos who wanted Hmong "patchwork quilts." Others are specializing in making the laborious hand embroidered skirt borders. All Hmong women, young and old, in the United States and Southeast Asia, have taken to making embroidered shoulder bags (from other Southeast Asian groups). On these, unrestrained by traditional patterns, they are giving their imagination free reign. Some women in the Bitterroot delight in presenting American friends with bags decorated with designs symbolizing all the English words they have learned. Others are imitating Yao designs or adapting the reverse applique procedure.

Hmong women, with their fine sense of humor, enjoy dressing American friends in their Hmong native costumes. Jo Rainbolt was photographing the women shortly after they arrived in the Bitterroot when one of them said, "You dress, take picture." The women brought out a heap of sashes, jackets, and pants and began fittings. First, a white silk blouse, then a black jacket piped in royal blue. A pair of baggy black pants were held up by a waist-nipping deep pink sash. Two more long sashes were wrapped around the waist. A Thai silk tie was knotted under the shirt collar and the turban wrapping began. The maroon turban cloth was long and uncooperative. After three giggling tries

they decided to leave it be. A heavy silver necklace completed the outfit.

A young man of the house came by. "Why don't you wear it home? See what your husband says," he teased, then added, "Don't get out of the car downtown. You might get your picture in the newspaper."

NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Donald P. Whitaker, et al., *Area Handbook for Laos*, DA PAM 500-38, 1972, pp. 20-26.
- <sup>2</sup>David C. Graham, *Songs and Stories of the Ch'uan Miao* (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collection, 1954), Vol. 123, No. 1, pl. 13.
- <sup>3</sup>Smauel Clarke, *Among the Tribes of Southwest China* (London: Inland Mission, 1911), p. 23.
- <sup>4</sup>Jacques Lemoine, *Un Village Hmong Vert du Haut Laos* (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1972), pp. 15-17.
- <sup>5</sup>Lin Yueh Hwa, "The Miao-Man Peoples of Kweichows," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 5, 1940, p. 271.
- <sup>6</sup>Inez de Beauclaire, "A Miao Tribe of Southwest Kweichow and Its Cultural Configurations," *Bulletin of Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica*, No. 10, 1960, p. 271.
- <sup>7</sup>Lemoine, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
- <sup>8</sup>Lin Yueh Hwa, *op. cit.*, p. 272.
- <sup>9</sup>Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
- <sup>10</sup>Lemoine, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
- <sup>11</sup>Henri M. d'Ollone, *Ecriture des Peuples non Chinois de la Chine, Ecritures Miao Man*, Documents Scientifiques de la Mission d'Ollone, 1906-1909, Vol. 7, pp. 21 ff.
- <sup>12</sup>Lemoine, *op. cit.*, p. 186.
- <sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, fig. 36, p. 134.
- <sup>14</sup>Linwood Barney, "The Meo of Xieng Khouang Province," in Peter Kunstadter (Ed.), *Southeast Asian Tribes, Minorities and Nations* (Princeton: University Press, 1967), Vol. 1, p. 286.
- <sup>15</sup>Beauclaire, *op. cit.*, p. 168.
- <sup>16</sup>Graham, *op. cit.*, p. 286.
- <sup>17</sup>Barney, *op. cit.*, p. 296.
- <sup>18</sup>Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-48; see also Lemoine, *op. cit.*, p. 184.
- <sup>19</sup>Barney, *op. cit.*, p. 277.
- <sup>20</sup>Lemoine, *op. cit.*, p. 98.
- <sup>21</sup>Nusit Chindarsi, *The Religion of the Hmong Njua* (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 1976), p. 18.
- <sup>22</sup>Guy Moréchand, "Principaux Traits du Chamamanisme Meo Blanc en Indochine," *Bulletin de l'École Française de l'Extrême Orient*, No. 47, 1969, p. 534.
- <sup>23</sup>Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
- <sup>24</sup>Chindarsi, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-62.
- <sup>25</sup>Beauclaire, *op. cit.*, footnote 1, p. 151.
- <sup>26</sup>Hugo Bernatzik (Tr. by A. Nagler), *The Akha and Miao* (New Haven: Human Relations Area File, 1970), pp. 651-667.
- <sup>27</sup>Graham, *op. cit.*, stories 3443 and 494, pp. 249-252.

<sup>12</sup>David G. Graham, "The Customs of the Ch'uan Miao," *Journal of West China Border Research Society*, Shanghai, No. 9, plates opposite pp. 32 and 56. See also Wilhelm von Koppens, "Tungusen und Miao," *Anthropologische Gesellschaft von Wien, Mitteilungen*, No. 60, 1930, fig. 3, p. 316.

<sup>13</sup>E. Garrett, "No Place to Run, The Hmong of Laos," *National Geographic Magazine*, Washington, D. C. (January 1974), lower picture, p. 103.

<sup>14</sup>Lemoine, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

<sup>15</sup>Graham, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>16</sup>Moni Adams, "Dress and Design in Highland Southeast Asia, The Hmong (Miao) and Yao," *Textile Museum Journal*, Washington, D. C., Vol. 4, No. 1, 1974, pp. 58-59.

<sup>17</sup>Lemoine, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

## *CREDITS*

### *CATALOG*

Pamphlet text and research by Susanne Bessac and Jo Rainbolt  
Typing of manuscript by Lynn Dragholm  
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    inside: Moa Mua wearing Striped Hmong costume

### *POSTER*

Photograph by Geoffery Sutton of Mai Vu Vang wearing a Striped Hmong hat

### *EXHIBITION*

Organized by Susanne Bessac  
Installation by David Hunt, Laurence Eick and students of the Department  
of Anthropology:  
Kathy Brasel  
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