

Hmong Baby Carriers in Minnesota: A material culture study

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## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving husband, Jimm Domingo. Thank you!

## **Abstract**

This study of Hmong baby carriers in Minnesota demonstrates the value of studying objects for what they convey about the people and the culture that make and use them. Hmong baby carriers have many functions, seen and unseen, that when examined and analyzed further an understanding and knowledge of Hmong culture in transition.

The Hmong living in Minnesota came to the United States as refugees from the war in Southeast Asia. They left their highland homes in Laos to wait out the conflict in refugee camps in Thailand. But returning home and to the life they longed for became impossible. So many Hmong found themselves living in the harsh climate of Minnesota. The first Hmong started arriving in 1976, eventually St. Paul became home for one of the largest populations of Hmong in the United States. Life has brought many challenges but the Hmong continue to adapt to change and thrive.

The McClung Fleming model for artifact analysis guided this study. The two part process identifies basic properties of the object and analyzes those properties through identification, evaluation, cultural analysis, and interpretation. Hmong baby carriers were brought by the 1<sup>st</sup> generation of Hmong immigrants to the United States as functional objects with symbolic and contextual meaning. Today Hmong baby carriers are still part of the cultural landscape but with added symbolism and contextual meaning for the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of Hmong.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A Hmong baby carrier or “daim nyias” viewed as an object of material culture can be analyzed to learn about the Hmong culture in transition from the 1<sup>st</sup> generation through the 1.5 generation (school age at immigration) to the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation (born and raised in the United States). These decorative cloth baby carriers which were broadly used in Laos and Thailand tie around the mother’s body to secure the baby onto her back freeing her hands for other tasks. In the Minneapolis/Saint Paul metropolitan area, the Hmong generally do not use the Hmong baby carriers in public. At Hmong events such as the Saint Paul Hmong New Year celebration and the summer sports festival, a few Hmong use the baby carrier. To learn about Hmong culture in transition and Hmong baby carriers, a material culture analysis using McClung Fleming’s model was conducted on Hmong baby carriers in the Saint Paul metropolitan area. To understand the changes in Hmong baby carrier use, interviews and a focus group were conducted with young Hmong women who are 1.5 or 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Americans.

The Hmong began immigrating to the United States most often through Thailand after the Communist Pathet Lao overthrew the Lao government in 1975 (Ranard, 2004; Vang & Lewis, 1990). The Hmong worked with the United States during the Vietnam War to cut off enemy supply lines through Laos. Helping the United States during the war meant that they became enemies of the state when communist forces took over the government (White, 1982). In order to survive many Hmong hid in the jungle of Laos moving constantly to avoid detection. Eventually many decided to escape to Thailand which

meant fording the Mekong River and enduring refugee camp life (Mallinson, Donnelly, & Hang, 1988; White, 1982). Prior to the war in Laos, the Hmong primarily lived an isolated agricultural life in villages of 20 to 40 families in the hills of northern Laos (Mallinson, Donnelly, & Hang, 1988; Ranard, 2004). During the decades long war, Hmong life in some regions was severely disrupted causing people to move into safer areas. This brought them into contact with other ethnic groups including the non-Hmong Lao. The contact continued in the Thai refugee camps where they lived with Hmong of different cultural beliefs, and other non-Hmong refugees from Laos. Eventually many Hmong were allowed to immigrate to the United States, and other predominately western countries. In the United States it was not possible for the Hmong to replicate their preferred rural hill country lifestyle. Therefore the Hmong have progressively adapted to living in an urban environment. During this time, the Hmong have continued to practice and express their cultural identity in many ways – such as special celebrations, living near other clan members, forming Hmong mutual assistance organizations.

The size and concentration of Hmong in the Minneapolis/Saint Paul metropolitan area make it an optimal location to research Hmong culture. In 2000, the Minnesota Hmong population was 41,800 with most of the population living in the Minneapolis/Saint Paul metropolitan area. Other large populations of Hmong live in California (65,095) and Wisconsin (33,791) (Hmong 2000 Population publication, 2003).

The Hmong have sub-group affiliations that relate to dress, language, beliefs, rituals, and customs. The Hmong living in the United States have three sub-group affiliations: Blue

Hmong, White Hmong, and Striped Hmong. The Blue Hmong are also called Green Hmong but for the purposes of this research I will use the term Blue Hmong<sup>1</sup>. The names come from the colors of the Hmong style clothing worn by each group. In addition to the sub-group affiliation there are two main Hmong languages dialects: Blue Hmong (Mong Leng) and White Hmong (Hmong Der) (Vang & Lewis, 1990). The dialects are generally mutually understandable (Ranard, 2004; Vang, 2008; Vang & Lewis, 1990). The pronunciation differences between the dialects are visible when written (Ranard, 2004). Differences in beliefs and rituals are rooted in the clan and kinship system (Vang, 2008). Before immigration, the majority of Hmong believed in animism and practiced ancestor worship (Ranard, 2004; Vang, 2008). The animism and ancestor worship rituals vary between clans (Vang, 2008). Clan members have the same last name and can trace their family line back to a common ancestor (Ranard, 2004; Vang, 2008). The clan and kinship system form the social structure of the Hmong community (Ranard, 2004; Vang, 2008). Since immigration, the Hmong have converted to Christianity at a higher rate than prior to immigration (Ranard, 2004; Vang, 2008). Approximately 30% of the U. S. Hmong population is Christian (Lee & Pfeifer, 2009/2010).

Earlier research has examined various aspects of Hmong life and adaptation. The research relevant to this project is focused on Hmong style dress. Annette Lynch (1999) in *Dress, gender, and social change* examined young Hmong's use of Hmong style dress

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<sup>1</sup> Green Hmong are referred to by two Hmong terms: Hmong Leng and Mong Njua. Hmong Leng is not a good spelling for the sound of these words because the *hm* does not occur in the Blue Hmong language. The word Njua in Mong Njua is considered by some Mong Leng speakers to be a derogatory term. Therefore I have chosen to use only the term Blue Hmong when referring to aspects of Mong Leng speakers dress, tradition, and beliefs (Ranard, 2004).

at the New Year celebration to negotiate gender expectations and notions of success. Hmong style dress worn to the New Year celebration is an assemblage of multiple pieces of clothing and jewelry that are highly embellished with embroidery, appliqué, and reverse appliqué. For her master's thesis, Masami Suga (1992) researched the importance of needlework in one immigrant Hmong woman's life in two environments: the northern mountains of Laos and the urban city in the United States. The artist expressed the importance of needlework and dress making as a "personal text that visually records and retells the life history of a Hmong woman who sewed it" (Suga, 1992, p. 3). Moving from Laos to the United States changed the role that sewing took for this artist. Sewing became an adaptation mechanism, according to this artist's story (Suga, 1992).

Hmong style baby carriers are one piece of dress infrequently worn at Hmong centered events in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area. In this research, the definition of dress

"...is a system of nonverbal communication that enhances human beings' interaction as they move in space and time. As a coded sensory system, dressing the body occurs when human beings modify their bodies visually or through other sensory measures by manipulating color, texture, scent, sound, and taste or by supplementing their bodies with articles of clothing, accessories, and jewelry (Eicher, J.B., 2000, p. 422)".

In visiting the Hmong New Year celebration in Saint Paul in two different years and one visit to the summer sports festival in Saint Paul, I only observed a couple of Hmong baby carriers being used at each event. In these public Hmong focused events, people opted for a western style baby carrying device – the stroller. During a conversation with a Saint

Paul Hmong business woman, she told me that when the Hmong use Hmong baby carriers in public, they believe they draw too much attention (S. Xiong, personal communication, April 2007). The attention makes them feel self-conscious, especially the younger Hmong (S. Xiong, personal communication, April 2007). Having been to Hmong events that were held in a large indoor event center or a large public park, I can see that it is easier and more convenient to use a stroller than a Hmong baby carrier. In this urban environment, the ground and indoor floors are covered with hard surfaces which make using a wheeled stroller very easy. A stroller also takes the weight of the baby off the carrier's body reducing physical exertion.

Like Hmong style dress, Hmong baby carriers are embellished with embroidery, appliqué and reverse appliqué. The Hmong call this embellishment "paj ntaub" or "flower cloth" (Cubbs, 1986; *Flower cloth of the Hmong*, 1985; Lynch, 1995; Lynch, 1999). Hmong needlework and designs are colorful and bold and therefore attract attention. Due in part to its prominence, visibility, and beauty on Hmong style dress, Hmong needlework has been the topic of general and academic literature. The literature and museum exhibits have brought the history and cultural importance of Hmong needlework and dress to the public. Hmong style needlework and dress are important in Hmong tradition and are used to express Hmong identity. It was the role of Hmong women to produce the needlework and clothing for their families before immigration to the United States. This time-consuming work dominated a woman's time especially during the slack agricultural periods and before the Hmong New Year celebration. Once in the Thai refugee camps and then in the United States, women had access to new fabrics and decorations which

innovative sewers integrated into Hmong style dress (Lynch, 1999). Lynch (1999) examined the way young Hmong integrate these changes into their understanding of being Hmong.

### Why study Hmong baby carriers?

In 1997, I saw Miao baby carriers for the first time in southwest China's Guizhou Province. I was captivated by their stunning beauty and the intricate needlework. These are utilitarian objects yet they are highly decorated with a variety of needlework styles depicting flowers and abstract motifs. One particular baby carrier (see Figure 1) is especially memorable not only for its beauty but for how it stood out from the surrounding environment of dull greens and grays of nature.



**Figure 1: Taipan Village,  
Guizhou Province, China, 1997  
Photo by M. A. Chaney**

Seen from the back, this baby carrier is covered with large colorful flowers on a black ground fabric. A large pink and red flower in the center of the carrier is surrounded by an elaborate floral border. Very little of the black ground fabric is visible because of the amount of embroidery covering the surface. The color and texture of the baby carrier stands in sharp contrast to the grey riverbed rock and the green mountains in the distance that frame the woman. In the dull light of early spring, the pink and red areas on the carrier are eye catching and mood lifting. The woman is dressed for a village festival with her hair pulled up and held in place with silver combs and clips, and her baby wears a black hat decorated with flowers. She carries her baby in the carrier to join the other villagers on the riverbank for the ritual ceremonies and entertaining games. The baby carrier was both a utilitarian and beautiful solution to participate in events and carry her baby over rough terrain.

Since seeing this carrier, I have come to think that it was probably a baby carrier cover and not the actual surface of the baby carrier that I saw. I have come to this conclusion because of the way the top folds over showing the black interior fabric and that the ties securing the baby into the carrier are not visible. The embellishment on the cover is bright and clean. Such a cover is used to cover a carrier that is worn and dingy from daily use.

This scene from China's Guizhou Province has stayed with me since 1997. In addition to this carrier, I saw other styles of Miao baby carriers in China. Seeing these baby carriers



influenced me to research Hmong baby carriers in the United States because the Hmong share a common ancestry with the Miao of China. The Hmong emigrated from Southeast Asia but trace their history back to China.

### Research Objective

The purpose of this research is to examine and analyze Hmong baby carriers using material culture analysis, and to interview Hmong women about baby carriers to learn about Hmong culture in transition. Use of material culture theory and analysis can reveal the significance of a material object to a culture because what humans make and use reflects their values and beliefs. By interviewing young Hmong women who live in the United States and speak English, I have learned about the current use of the carriers and the knowledge that the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation have about Hmong baby carriers. Utilizing these two methods together has brought out aspects of the change and continuity in the material object, the patterns of use, and knowledge and perceptions of young Hmong women about Hmong baby carriers. By researching Hmong baby carriers, the significance of the object to Hmong culture was revealed, and thereby I learned more about the cultural change since immigration. When the Hmong immigrated to the United States, the few objects they brought with them usually included their best set of Hmong style clothing and a couple of needlework pieces (*Flower Cloth of the Hmong*, 1985). Textiles and clothing were prized by the Hmong as family treasures, as examples of women's needlework skills, and symbols of collective ethnic identity (Crystal, 1984). With the change in country of residence and way of living for the Hmong in the United States, Hmong baby carriers are used less frequently and mostly in the privacy of home

which is different than in Thailand and Laos when they used the baby carrier on a daily basis. The interviewing of young Hmong women about baby carrier use contributed to understanding the changes and continuity in Hmong culture as each generation has adapted to life in the United States.

### Justification

This research documents the Hmong baby carrier and Hmong culture, including the immigrant experience and adaptation to the United States. It also contributes to understanding the value of baby carriers in Hmong culture, daily life, assumptions of child care, and expression of culture through objects. The documentation of material culture contributes to the documentation of Hmong cultural heritage. With the process of each generation adapting to ongoing social change, documenting Hmong baby carriers as cultural heritage and young Hmong views on baby carriers preserves this knowledge for future generations whose lives are different from the immigrant generation. Younger generations will have this research as a resource to learn about Hmong cultural and social values across time and about Hmong material culture. Museums and other types of collecting institutions benefit from ongoing research on objects from their collections. The museums and institutions in possession of the Hmong baby carriers examined for this research benefit the most from the results of this research because it contributes to the existing knowledge about the specific baby carriers, the Hmong culture and the people who produced them. This research also benefits anyone interested in Hmong material culture, Hmong adaptation to life in the United States, and Hmong culture in general.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following literature review for research of Hmong baby carriers addresses material culture theory, possession attachment theory, research methods and subject area literature. The research methods covered are the material culture approach via the McClung Fleming model, and people centered approach via interviewing and focus groups. The subject area literature covered includes Hmong style dress, Hmong *paj ntaub*, and Miao textile techniques. The literature on Hmong style dress, New Year celebration, and *paj ntaub* provide the history and context for understanding Hmong baby carriers. Because of the ancestral connection to the Hmong, the documentation of Miao textile techniques will aid in identification of some of the techniques used to produce Hmong baby carriers.

### Relevance of Material culture literature and theory

Material culture theory explains that the objects humans make, be they utilitarian or art, are produced and used within specific cultural contexts. Objects as one component of culture can help to understand the other two components: the mental and the social life of the human being (McClung Fleming, 1974; Prown and Haltman, 2000). Because objects have meaning and value to humans, studying them reveals the values, beliefs, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions of the makers and users of the objects. Cultural contexts influence how an object is made and used. This reveals knowledge about the culture, even the unspoken, unconscious aspects of the culture (Prown and Haltman, 2000). “A culture’s most fundamental beliefs are often so widely understood, so generally shared and accepted, that they never need to be stated” (Prown, 2000, p. 13). Cultural context

includes the social context within which each object is made and used. Cultural and social aspects are reflected in the physical form of the object (Prown and Haltman, 2000). As McClung Fleming states, “every culture...is absolutely dependant on its artifacts for its survival and self-realization” (McClung Fleming, 1974, p. 153). Because utilitarian objects are made unselfconsciously, they are the most informative about the generally accepted and unacknowledged beliefs and values of a culture (Prown and Haltman, 2000).

Based on this theory, objects from a variety of regions have been studied as a means of learning about the cultures that produced and used them. In archeology, human made objects dug from the ground are studied (McClung Fleming, 1974). These objects tell about cultures that are gone or so changed that the cultures are no longer recognizable. In social history, material culture research is done to document objects and make connections between fields of study to gain a better and more comprehensive understanding of the past (McClung Fleming, 1974; Prown and Haltman, 2000).

In *The Meaning of Things: Domestic symbols and the self*, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) approach the study of material culture by introducing the concept of human ‘psychic energy’ as the attention people expend on human and object relations. Through their research interviewing people about what objects are important to them and how they are important, the researchers found that the meaning of an object differs between people, lifestages, and gender.

When a person expends his or her attention on one object, he or she cannot expend it on another object. This is a choice the person makes, which reflects his or her values and goals. The ‘object’ of attention then informs the person’s self. Humans make and use objects but the objects also contribute to self-concept. Interaction with objects directly impacts human behavior and how a person perceives herself. This is a constant process of making the material world then interacting with it. This is a reciprocal process seen at individual, community, and societal levels. “Even the use of things for utilitarian purposes operates within the symbolic province of culture” (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981, p. 20). Objects socialize a person into certain habits or behaviors and become signs that represent that way of life (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981).

#### Possession Attachment Theory

Attachment is the bond, or set of feelings that a person has about a particular object or location (Boschetti, 1995). Possession attachment theory explains how and why possessions are important to people. It addresses the personal relationship where material culture theory addresses objects on a cultural level. Possession attachment explains how possessions are incorporated into a person’s self conception or sense of self (Belk, 1988; Boschetti, 1995). Possessions can function in a number of ways when incorporated into one’s self concept (Belk, 1988; Boschetti, 1995). Belk (1988) named the phenomenon of possessions contributing to self concept as ‘the extended self’. A variety of ‘possessions’ can be used to extend the self, such as people, places, group possessions, body parts, and organs (Belk, 1988). The extension can be physical or symbolic. A physical extension of

the self happens when a person uses a tool such as a hammer. A symbolic extension of self happens when a person thinks of herself as different when she has the object such as when wearing a uniform (Belk, 1988). “Self extension occurs through control and mastery of an object, through creation of an object, through knowledge of an object, and through contamination via proximity and habituation to an object” (Belk, 1988, p. 160). Contamination is when a person attempts to incorporate traits of the object into the self (Belk, 1988)

Boschetti (1995) in her research on the role of possessions in forming place attachment for older people found two themes that describe possession attachment: connection/extension and continuity/discontinuity. Connection/extension is used to describe possessions that symbolize the personal self. “These are possessions that have meaning within the span of the person’s own life because they connect the person to important people or past experiences” (Boschetti, 1995, p. 4) and the possession triggers memory thereby extending the person’s sense of self over time (Boschetti, 1995). Boschetti found that this type of possession often is a childhood possession, diaries, and photographs (1995). “We use possessions to store feelings and memories that attach our sense of past selves to present identity” (Boschetti, 1995, p. 7). The connection to the past allows a person to be both the child from the past and the adult in the present (Boschetti, 1995). Continuity/discontinuity is used to describe possessions that symbolize the historical self. This type of possession is passed down from ancestors that link the owner to people from the past (Boschetti, 1995). The link preserves family

continuity and aides the owner in knowing his place in the extended family structure (Boschetti, 1995).

Metha and Belk (1991) studied favorite possessions and the impact of immigration by interviewing South Asian immigrants in the United States and South Asians in India. The purpose was to study the meaning of favorite objects when the owner is in the process of identity transformation induced by immigration. Metha and Belk (1991) addressed the aspect of individuality in South Asians' concept of self which is different from the Western concept of self. "The Indian self is thought to be less individualistic and less susceptible to the Cartesian dualism of self as both subject and object"(Metha & Belk, 1991, p. 399). What they found is that South Asians in the United States had transitional objects that provided a sense of security and a sense of cultural identity. These transitional objects were from India and represented India to the owner, whereas South Asians living in India did not need objects to remind them of India. Metha and Belk found that South Asians in the United States practiced a pattern of consumption that mixed South Asian objects and American objects, such as when a woman wears a sari or Indian jewelry with western clothing (Metha & Belk, 1991).

Possession attachment theory and material culture theory explain people's relationships with objects at the personal and cultural levels. Metha and Belk's (1991) study is important to my research because of the similarities between the studies including the immigrant context and the non-western concept of self. There are important differences

between their study and my research, but it offers a basic foundation for any research on material culture and migratory groups.

#### Material Culture Model – Why McClung Fleming?

McClung Fleming's model for material culture analysis was followed for this research because of its flexibility. Two other models that were evaluated are Prown (2000) and Zimmerman (1981). Prown (2000) discusses the problem of bringing our own culture and patterns of belief to the process of material culture analysis. Prownian analysis is divided into five steps: description, deduction, speculation, research and interpretive analysis. At the speculation step, hypotheses are entertained by the researcher about what the object signifies. Research follows the speculation step. In the McClung Fleming model, research is ongoing during the process and cultural analysis does not rely on speculation. This model leaves less chance for researcher bias to impact the interpretation of the object's meaning. Zimmerman's (1981) approach is to examine workmanship as evidence. His approach requires a large number of similar objects to compare to each other. Zimmerman's approach did influence me to pay attention to the quality of workmanship of the Hmong baby carriers as a point of comparison. But the number of carriers available to examine was not large enough to use Zimmerman's approach.

The flexibility of McClung Fleming's model has been demonstrated by Ann Braaten (2005) in her analysis of shawls owned by German women who immigrated from Russia. Braaten's research required adaptation of the model for the objects under analysis. A



common issue for the analysis of dress as material culture is that dress objects are worn on the three-dimensional body yet the researcher sees the object in a two-dimensional state. This difference changes the viewer's perception of the object. Braaten addressed this problem by examining participants' family photographs and period advertisements of shawls.

### Interviews and focus groups

Interviews are a form of conversation where the interviewer and participant interact with the purpose of exchanging and generating knowledge (Kvale, 1996). "The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations" (Kvale, 1996, p. 1). The advantages of qualitative interviewing include the ability to capture "the experiences and lived meanings of the subjects' everyday world" (Kvale, 1996, p. 70). A strength of the interview method is its ability to record a wide range of views on a theme within the subject pool. The data captures the phenomenon in all its numerous and varied complexities (Kvale, 1996).

Focus groups are a type of interviewing method where people are brought together to discuss a topic of interest to the researcher (Morgan, 1988). They have been extensively used for marketing research. In social science, focus groups are used because they produce rich data expressed in participants' own language and context (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Understanding the insider language and perception of a phenomenon is invaluable to a researcher investigating the phenomenon. Advantages of focus groups

include the high level of participation and relatively spontaneous responses from participants (Morgan, 1988). “When all goes well, focusing the group discussion on a single topic brings forth material that would not come out in either the participants’ own casual conversations or in response to the researcher’s preconceived questions” (Morgan, 1988, p. 21).

#### Hmong style dress worn at the Hmong New Year celebration

The Hmong New Year celebration is a time when Hmong families gather for festivities, performances, and food. In metropolitan areas with a sizable Hmong population, a community wide celebration is held. The larger celebrations draw Hmong from around the country for camaraderie and a chance to find a spouse. The Saint Paul New Year celebration is one of the largest events of this kind. A major part of the celebration is the ball toss ‘game’. This is a time when young men and women talk with each other while tossing a ball back and forth. The point of this game is to find a spouse, and wearing Hmong style dress is an integral part of impressing the opposite sex. The quality of a person’s dress reflects on the wearer and his or her family. For women then, dress is particularly important in attracting a spouse because of the historical practice of the woman making her own outfit. The quality of her sewing skills is visible for everyone to see including the man’s family. In the past, sewing skills have been used to evaluate a woman’s suitability as a wife. “For you as a Hmong girl, it is very important to do very fine work when they look at your clothing, your stitches, you put your patience, your quality everything about you and your family in there” (S. Xiong, personal communication, April 2007).

Since the first wave of Hmong immigrants arrived, Hmong style dress has changed and reflects the changes in Hmong life. The Hmong living in the United States represent three sub-groups of Hmong: Blue, White, and Striped. In the years just after the first wave of immigration, these groups could be distinguished by differences in their dress (Cubbs, 1986). The changes in dress from distinct subgroups to a blended Hmong American dress can be explained by the formation of new ethnic boundaries between Hmong and non-Hmong (Lynch, 1995a). The changes can also be understood as a reflection of the desire to balance Hmong tradition and American culture (Lynch, 1995b).

Lynch (1999) in *Dress and social change* examines the context of ritual as the site for transmitting and reinforcing culturally based gender norms. During the Hmong New Year celebration, rights of passage rituals are performed which “help young people and adults reconcile traditional gender roles with the new gender roles emerging in the United States” (Lynch, 1999, p. 3).

#### Paj ntaub literature

In her essay “Hmong Art: Tradition and Change” in the book by the same name, Joanne Cubbs (1986) introduces the subject of Hmong dress and the needle arts used to produce it. She writes about textile production and the making of paj ntaub, which is also spelled pa ndau. Paj ntaub or flower cloth in English is cloth that has been decorated with the surface embellishment techniques of appliqué, reverse appliqué, embroidery, and batik. The decorated cloth is used for textiles and clothing. Cubbs also explains the differences

in dress between the three Hmong sub-groups living in the United States. She addresses the impact of acculturation on Hmong art and dress. She includes a small but informative passage on baby carriers. She states that the Blue Hmong style baby carrier, which is constructed with a central panel of indigo batik, has been adopted by the White Hmong. Adaptations from using genuine batik can be seen, such as commercial fabric printed with batik patterns or solid blue colored fabric. The mother of a Hmong bride may make an additional gift to her dowry of a baby carrier for its utility, but it is also a cultural symbol of the desire for many children. When a baby is born, its paternal grandmother will make a baby carrier or a hat. Both of these objects provide physical as well as spiritual functions, because the decoration will attract and help keep the baby's soul in the body as well as draw protective spirits. The red appliquéd X patterns on the central panel of the carrier fend off malevolent spirits.

Hafner-Hoppenworth (1989) compares ornamental paj ntaub made during two time periods, 1977-1977 and 1981-1983, to document and measure the change of paj ntaub in the Lansing, Michigan area. In her review of literature on paj ntaub, she presents the techniques used, the history, and folklore. She classifies paj ntaub into four forms: costume, pictorial pieces or story clothes, American adaptations, and ornamental pieces. American adaptations are functional objects decorated with Hmong designs such as book marks, vests, and place mats. Ornamental pieces are square or rectangular blocks with decorative Hmong designs in the center surrounded by a cloth boarder. She does not classify Hmong baby carriers into one of these four categories. She mentions them in the section on the technique of batik which is also used on Blue Hmong skirts. Her

comparison and analysis of ornamental paj ntaub is based on design motifs, color, size, and ornamental construction techniques. She uses a design motif index produced by the Michigan State University Museum to catalog and classify the design motifs on the ornamental paj ntaub. The design motif index could be useful in the research on baby carriers.

My master's thesis (Chaney, 2006) was a focused life history of a young Hmong American woman about the role of Hmong embroidery in her life. She used Hmong motifs and materials in her final project, a clothing line for her degree in clothing design. "Only by using aspects of both dress cultures (western and Hmong) and production systems can she express her own creativity and experience of being Hmong and growing up in the United States" (Chaney, 2006, p. 60). During the interview, she acknowledged the impact of growing up around sewing and clothes making on her career choice to become a clothing designer. "My whole life I've been surrounded by...art and clothing, I just never realized it" (Chaney, 2006, p. 48).

#### Miao Literature

Three books have been published on the processes used by the Miao of Guizhou province to produce textiles and clothing. The books are extremely detailed with photographs and diagrams of cloth production, braiding, embroidery, dyeing, and finishing textiles (S.Torimaru, 2001; Tormaru & Torimaru, 2004; T. Torimaru, 2008). These are relevant to this research project as a resource for technique identification because the Miao and the Hmong share a common ancestral heritage. They use many of the same techniques.

Based on the literature review, there are a number of research areas that will inform this research on Hmong baby carriers. Incorporating the material culture approach with person based research provides added dimension to the understanding of Hmong baby carriers in the transition from pre-immigration to the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Hmong culture. Attachment theory brings in another view of the relationship between people and specific objects. In addition to the physical and symbolic functions of an object, attachment theory looks at the function of memory and remembering experiences, places, and people. This function of memory and remembering has an added dimension when the objects and the people have immigrated. The earlier research on Hmong dress, textiles, and paj ntaub provides the history and context that produced Hmong baby carriers.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH PROCEDURE

My objective was to document and analyze Hmong baby carriers as a means of learning more about and gaining an understanding of Hmong culture in transition. Two research methods were used to accomplish the research: 1) a material cultural analysis following McClung Fleming's model and 2) a combination of an in-person focus group and interviews with young Hmong women to learn about their understanding, knowledge and use of Hmong baby carriers. These two methods were used because together they elicited information about Hmong baby carriers from the 1<sup>st</sup> or immigrant generations' point of view through the object and written materials while the interviews brought out the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations' experience. The 1.5 generation is defined as people who immigrated to the United States as children. The 2<sup>nd</sup> generation is defined as people born and raised in the United States.

### Material Culture Analysis

Eighteen Hmong baby carriers located in Saint Paul, Minnesota were examined for material culture analysis. These carriers were chosen because they met the requirements of being from Southeast Asia or the United States and being full sized. Seventeen of the carriers were located in local St. Paul, Minnesota museums, archives, and educational institutions: the Science Museum of Minnesota (7), the Hmong Archives (6), the Hmong Cultural Center (2), and the Center for Hmong Studies at Concordia University (2). I purchased the eighteenth carrier at a local Hmong market as an example of the common style of new carriers available locally. This carrier is an example with a known time and location of purchase to compare with the other carriers.

The visual similarities of carriers were clear; the differences were less obvious. To document the similarities and differences with equal attention, I developed an examination data sheet which was completed for each baby carrier. The data sheet was revised after the first couple of baby carriers were examined. The final version included size, shape, fabric structure, fiber types, embellishment types, color, and additional remarks (see Appendix B). I used my knowledge of textiles along with a small (6x) linen tester magnifying glass to identify the fiber types and fabric structures. Since I was not able to remove yarn samples from the seventeen carriers owned by educational institutions, the fiber and yarn identification were made on gross visual characteristics. I did examine yarn and fiber samples from my carrier with laboratory microscopes. This provided additional information so I could make judgments about fiber content for the other baby carriers. I photographed the front and back of the carriers including close-up shots of any details. I entered the data into a spreadsheet to sort and discern the most common baby carrier characteristics. This allowed me to select the carrier with the largest number of common characteristics for detailed analysis using the McClung Fleming model. The other seventeen baby carriers were then analyzed as a group also using the McClung Fleming model.

### The McClung Fleming Model

I followed the McClung Fleming model of artifact analysis for the material culture analysis. As McClung Fleming says, “To know man [*sic*] we must study the things he has made...” (1974, p. 8). From monuments to the ubiquitous highway, made objects are



a basic expression of the people and a means of self fulfillment. This flexible model allowed me to focus on the characteristics of Hmong baby carriers that have the most relevance. The model is broken down into two phases: basic properties and operations. Following is a brief outline with a brief description of each step.

### Basic Properties

- 1) History- when and where made, by whom and for whom and why, ownership, condition, and function
- 2) Material- what is it made of
- 3) Construction- how was it made, techniques, workmanship, and organization of parts to fulfill function
- 4) Design- structure, form, style, ornament, and iconography
- 5) Function- intended and unintended functions and roles in its culture, including utility, delight, and communication

### Operations

- 1) Identification- factual description
- 2) Evaluation- judgments based on comparison with other examples of its kind
- 3) Cultural analysis- relationship of the artifact to its culture  

This analysis will be carried out by review of literature for cultural relevance and association for the Hmong.
- 4) Interpretation- significance, the meaning and significance in relation to aspects of our own culture

This model was followed to analyze baby carrier H5.2002.125.271 from the Hmong Archive. Then the model was followed to analyze the other seventeen as a group. Data and analysis from these procedures are presented in Chapter 4.

### Focus Groups and Interviews

Focus groups are a good method when “looking for the range of ideas or feelings that people have about something” (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 24) and when people with different experiences will have differing opinions (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The purpose of questioning young Hmong women is to collect data on contemporary and younger generations’ values and beliefs of baby carriers. The Hmong dress and needlework literature primarily focuses on life before immigration or on the immigrant generation’s experience. The exception is Lynch’s work (1995a, 1999) on Hmong New Year dress in St. Paul. By recruiting college age and post-college age Hmong women, I have elicited their experiences and feelings as 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Hmong living in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. These generations’ navigate between two distinct spheres: Hmong home life and American school life. Their experience of Hmong baby carriers is different than the experience of the immigrant generation whose life revolved around the family and home.

I recruited participants through Hmong student organizations at local universities and colleges and from Hmong contacts in St. Paul. I piloted the interview questions with a Hmong colleague. The focus group was conducted with five Hmong women at a local university. Four of the participants were college-age while one participant was post-

college age. I also interviewed three post-college age Hmong women with children. I transcribed then analyzed the audio recordings from the focus group and interviews for recurring themes related to knowledge and use of baby carriers. Table 1 lists the participants with identification codes, age group, and parental status. I used the same set of interview questions developed for the focus groups for the interviews with only minor changes. For example, I eliminated the opening question asking what the participant was studying in school. I asked follow up or probe questions when participants' answers needed clarification or brought up an aspect of Hmong baby carriers unanticipated. The questions asked in the focus group and interviews can be found in Appendix A. I present data from the focus group and interviews in Chapter 5.

**Table 1: Participant Data**

<b>Participant Code</b>	<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Parental Status</b>
FGP1*	Post College	Mother
FGP2	College Age	Non-mother
FGP3	College Age	Non-mother
FGP4	College Age	Non-mother
FGP5	College Age	Non-mother
IP1*	Post College	Mother
IP2	Post College	Mother
IP3	Post College	Mother

\* FGP1 means focus group participant 1

\*IP1 means interview participant 1

## CHAPTER 4: MATERIAL CULTURE ANALYSIS DATA

### Introduction to Hmong Baby Carriers Examined

I examined eighteen Hmong baby carriers for material culture analysis. These carriers were selected because they are in St. Paul, Minnesota and identified as Hmong from Laos, Thailand, or the United States. Carriers from China were excluded from the research. No baby carrier covers as discussed in Chapter 1 were examined. Seventeen of the carriers are housed at four different cultural or educational institutions while I own the eighteenth one. The four institutions have varying missions and different requirements on documentation and provenance for the baby carriers. This means that the documentation was inconsistent and that a material culture approach would provide a solid foundation for learning about these Hmong baby carriers.

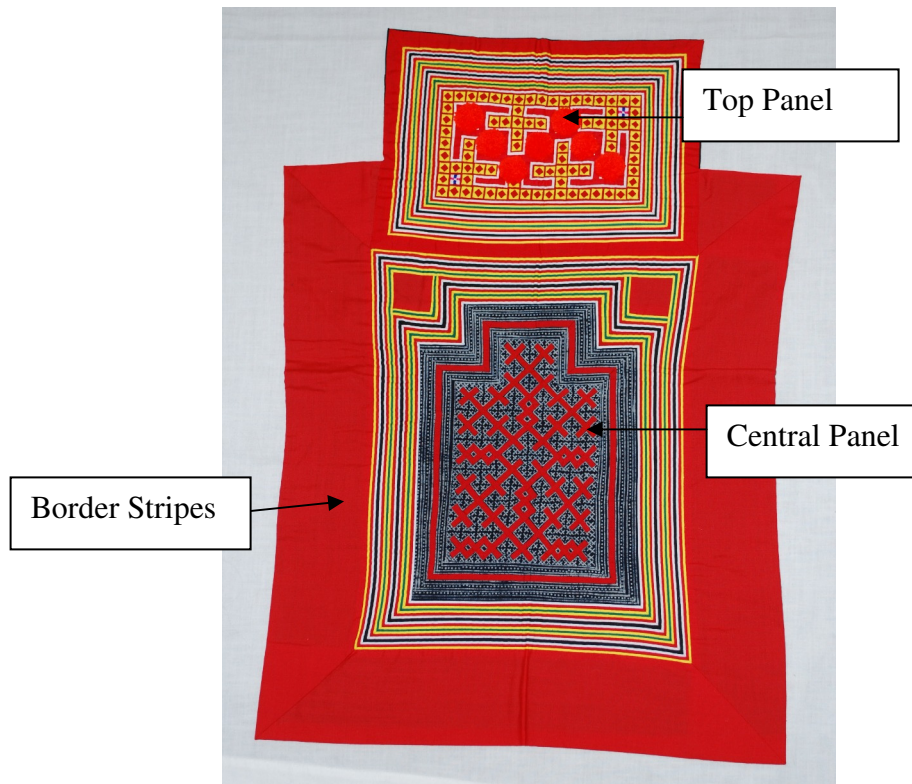
The first section is a detailed analysis of one baby carrier following McClung Fleming's model of artifact analysis. The next section is an overview and description of the characteristics observed on the baby carriers which were used to select the carrier with the most common characteristics for the detailed analysis in the first section. I used the McClung Fleming model in a modified form to analyze these carriers. The modification addressed some of the steps when the information had already been covered in the analysis of the single carrier.

### Analysis and Interpretation through One Carrier

Since there are a number of similarities shared among this group of Hmong baby carriers, I selected one baby carrier in the group for analysis and interpretation. I made the

selection by comparing all the carriers on 10 characteristics related to size, shape, fabric types, color, and embellishment types. I gleaned additional information for this process from literature on Hmong culture, dress, and paj ntaub. The literature fills in the holes on the cultural context in which Hmong baby carriers are produced and used. I also included information from a personal interview on Hmong baby carriers with a middle age Hmong immigrant woman, S. Xiong. I use the term 'middle' age to describe her because it reflects her status as a Hmong woman with adult children not her chronological age. Her experience of growing up in a refugee camp in Thailand and immigrating to the United States as a young woman parallels the immigrant experience that is presented in the literature. The analysis and interpretation of baby carrier H5.2002.125.271 (Figure 2) from the Hmong Archive in St. Paul, Minnesota follows.

The McClung Fleming process of analysis and interpretation was used as previously described. The basic properties include history, material, construction, design, and function. The four operations are identification, evaluation, cultural analysis, and interpretation.



**Figure 2: H5.2002.125.271**

### Basic Properties

#### *History:*

There is little documentation about this carrier. It was accessioned into Hmong Archive in 2002. There is a cloth twill tape sewn to the lower left corner on the back which has the accession number and the words Plua Ly. This may be the maker or the person who donated the piece to the Hmong Archive. The accession notes do not explain the notation. The notes include the date of 92Nov and the cost of \$35. The date may be when the carrier was made. The carrier was never used because there are no visible needle holes that would indicate that straps had been attached. Baby carriers are usually sold without the long cloth strap or tie attached. The strap is attached by the user so she can make it the right length to wrap around her body (S. Xiong, personal communication,

April 2007). See Figure 3 and Figure 4 for how the strap is attached to the back of the top panel of the baby carrier. The strap is a long piece of fabric folded lengthwise several times. See Figure 5 and Figure 6 for how the strap is wrapped around the child and mother.



**Figure 3: HCC1 det18**



**Figure 4: HCC1 det1**



**Figure 5: Infant on front  
Photo by S. Lindbergh**



**Figure 6: Toddler on back  
Photo by S. Lindbergh**

*Materials:*

I examined the fabrics and thread in this baby carrier with a small 6X magnifying linen tester for identifying features. The fabric of H5.2002.125.271 is clean and the colors are bright indicating no wear or fading. The border stripes and appliqué are made with the same cotton or cotton polyester fabric in different colors. The central panel is indigo blue batik on white hemp or coarse spun cotton. The pompoms on the top panel are a

synthetic two ply spun yarn in a red/orange color. The backing fabric is a black cotton or cotton polyester blend. The sewing thread is a filament yarn of silk or a synthetic fiber. The embroidery on the top panel is a fine possibly two ply thread done in pink and blue (Figure 7).



**Figure 7: H5.2002.125.271 det13**

*Construction:*

The carrier is hand sewn and constructed of commercially produced fabric with appliqué and embroidery embellishment. The central panel is batik produced using a wax resist and dyed with natural or synthetic indigo. The base fabric of the central panel may be hand woven hemp or coarse cotton. The warp and weft threads are larger in diameter and more loosely woven than the other fabrics. This contrast in thread size and weave is demonstrated in Figure 8 between the central panel base fabric and the red appliqué fabric.





Figure 8: H5.2002.125.271 det14

*Design:*

“Design included the structure, form, style, ornament, and iconography of the object”

(Fleming, 1974, p. 156). Hmong baby carriers are structured from flat fabric pieces and

thread into a flat object which is flexible. The flexibility of the fabric allows the user to

secure an infant or small child to the front or back of her or his torso. The form is a flat

rectangular shape measuring 22.83 inches high and 16.06 inches wide. The larger

rectangle or central panel is 18.37 inches high and 16.06 inches wide. The smaller

rectangle or top panel is 4.33 inches high and 10.24 inches wide. This carrier does not

have straps attached. The carrier is identifiable as Blue Hmong style because of the batik

central panel embellished with appliqué. The top panel of the carrier is ornamented with

appliqué and seven red/orange yarn pompoms. A red appliqué geometric pattern is

surrounded by appliqué gold squares embellished with smaller red appliqué diamonds

(Figure 9). The red geometric pattern stands out from the background appliqué because it

is applied on top of a white layer of appliqué in the same pattern only slightly larger.

Two small white squares with pink and blue satin stitch embroidery complete the

rectangle of the red geometric appliqué.



Figure 9: H5.2002.125.271det4

Red appliqué strips are applied in a geometric pattern on a batik ground fabric of the central panel. Both the top panel and central panel are surrounded by a border of 20 narrow stripes and one wide stripe.

The symbolism associated with Hmong baby carriers is in the embellishments. Caitlin and Swift (1987) describe the red geometric appliqué pattern on the batik central panels as recalling the narrow bamboo bridges, dead-end paths, and complex intersections that can prevent a baby's soul from wandering. The top panel appliqué pattern may be what Erik Cohen calls the Hmong cross, which he believes has "at root an iconic cosmological representation, possessing a deep-structural symbolic meaning in Hmong culture" (2000, p. 100). The small pink and blue embroidered squares on the top panel represent a vegetable blossom (paj zaub) or mustard green flowers (Cubbs, 1986, p.21; Flower Cloth of the Hmong, 1985, back cover).

*Function:*

The function includes intended and unintended uses such as delight and communication.

The Hmong baby carriers' intended utility is to carry and care for babies and small

children and to protect them from physical and spiritual harm. In Laos, mothers would carry their infant or small child in a baby carrier to the family fields to work. Keeping the child in the carrier kept them out of harm's way which includes the child wandering off, hurting themselves, or being attacked by a wild animal (Ranard, 2004). The spiritual protection comes from the surface embellishment which foils malevolent 'wild' spirits<sup>2</sup> and prevents them from taking or enticing the child's soul or souls<sup>3</sup> to leave the body (Caitlin & Swift, 1987; Lewis & Lewis, 1998). In Hmong belief, spiritual health affects physical health. A person becomes ill when a soul leaves the body; the more souls lost and the longer the loss continues, the more serious and less treatable the illness becomes (Dia, 2003; Thao, X., 1986). Infants' and children's souls are particularly prone to leaving their small bodies (Caitlin & Swift, 1987). The embellishment takes at least two forms: disguise and obstruction. The disguising embellishments look floral which is said to trick the "bad spirits" into thinking that the child is a flower (Adams, 1974). Pompoms in bright colors are sewn onto the top panel in designs that look like flowers (Figure 10).



**Figure 10: H5.2002.125.272 det7**

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<sup>2</sup> Hmong animism includes 'tame' and 'wild' spirits. The wild spirits are outside the village (Lewis, P. & E. Lewis, (1998).

<sup>3</sup> Literature on Hmong beliefs indicates that there is not a consensus on the number of souls an individual has (Cha, 2003).

The geometric patterns or ‘paths’ on the central panel keep the child’s soul from leaving the body and the bad spirits from getting close to the child (Figure 11) (Caitlin & Swift, 1987). Through the practice of ancestor worship, people maintain a relationship with ancestors’ spirits who in turn influence daily life and welfare (Ranard, 2004). The ‘path’ patterns are also said to be associated with the spirits of family ancestors who watch over and protect the living (S. Xiong, personal communication, April 2007). The repeating nature of the ‘path’ patterns also represents the continuation of the family from generation to generation (S. Xiong, personal communication, April 2007). These patterns are similar to the patterns sewn onto the clothing for the deceased (Caitlin & Swift, 1987).



Figure 11: H5.2002.125.271 det3

As a gift a baby carrier represents the Hmong cultural expectation of producing children to continue the family and how children will be raised. The more children a family has, the more love the family has (S. Xiong, personal communication, April 2007). Back in

Laos, older children provided help on the farm so the family had enough food (S. Xiong, personal communication, April 2007; Walker, 1989). But in the United States, S. Xiong says that it is too expensive to have many children (personal communication, April 2007). Since Hmong baby carriers are given as wedding gifts by the bride's mother, it is implicit in the gift that the couple will have children. The baby carrier also implies that the way to take care of infants is to keep them physically close for constant care.

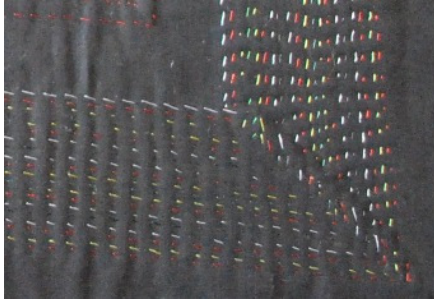
### Operations

#### *Identification:*

Identification is classification, authentication, and description. A baby carrier is classified by its basic function for use in caring for infants and small children. This carrier is Hmong because it was made in a Hmong style by a Hmong person, most likely a woman. It can be identified by its multi piece flat fabric construction composed of a larger rectangle, a smaller rectangle, and a long piece narrowly folded piece of fabric attached to the top and back of the smaller rectangle. This carrier does not have the straps because it was never used. The straps are sewn on by the mother. This style of carrier was brought to the United States by Hmong refugees from Laos via Thailand. It is a Blue Hmong style because of the blue batik central panel and appliqué embellishment (White, 1982, p. 12). These two techniques were practiced by Blue Hmong (Mallinson, Donnelly, & Hang, 1988, p. 43). White Hmong do not do batik, but stitch intricate patterns in reverse appliqué (Flower Cloth of the Hmong, 1985, p. 6).

*Evaluation:*

Evaluation refers to the quality of materials and construction used in comparison with other similar objects. The central panel base fabric is a looser weave than the other fabrics used in the piece, possibly hand woven, lower thread count per inch than the other fabric used, which is an unbalanced dense weave, commercially woven fabric. The other carriers were also made with a variety of fibers and weaves. Hand stitching is very fine and consistent. The thread used to sew the border matches the fabric color and is done in blind or slip stitch (Laury, J, 1966). The stitches can not be seen on the front but are especially visible on the black back fabric. The central panel appliqué is executed in the same way, matching red thread sewn in blind stitch and visible on the back. The purpose of sewing through the fabric may be to add stability to the piece and provide additional texture to help the carrier stay in place while being used. The thread produces a pattern on the wrong side and a color contrast to black backing fabric. The sewing thread is a smooth filament thread, silk or synthetic. The stitches are straight and equally spaced ( Figure 12). There is a variation in the quality between the fine sewing on the body of the carriers and the coarse attachment of the pompoms. Since the pompoms were attached through the backing fabric, the large orange thread is visible on the back of the carrier ( Figure 13). In the same figure, the fine pink and blue thread of the paj zaub embroidery motif can be seen.



**Figure 12: H5.2002.125.271 det9**



**Figure 13: H5.2002.125.271 det12**

The black backing fabric was pieced together to fit the front. Two narrow strips of fabric were added, one at the top edge of the top panel and the other on the left side of the central panel. The piecing indicates that the maker of this carrier may have been using what fabric she had on hand.

Comparison to other objects of the same kind is part of the evaluation operation. The following is a brief comparison to the other Hmong baby carriers that I examined. H5.2002.125.271 is similar in size, form, style, construction techniques, and ornament to the other baby carriers. The color is also similar in hue, intensity, and chroma to the other carriers. Quality of materials and sewing is comparable to the other carriers, with a couple having coarser sewing. Because this is a new carrier, there isn't any damage from wear or fading, whereas the used carriers show both. There is a subtle difference in embellishment patterns on the central panel and top panel between this carrier and the other carriers. The geometric appliqué patterns vary a little and are easy to identify as the same type of pattern. This is also true of the geometric patterns on the top panels. On two of the other carriers, the top panel geometric patterns are replicated in cross stitch

embroidery instead of appliqué. Appliqué and cross stitch were used to produce the patterns on the top panels of two additional carriers.

*Cultural analysis:*

Cultural analysis involves the interrelationships of the artifact and the culture that produced it. By examining the basic properties of this Hmong baby carrier especially its design and function, its importance as a tool to care for children is easily understood. The Hmong baby carrier also demonstrates the value of children in the Hmong family and social structure. It is also an integral object to a woman's life as the maker of textiles and mother to children. As a textile object, Hmong baby carriers share many attributes with other Hmong textiles such as Hmong special occasion dress and funeral clothing.

*Importance of babies*

Children are highly valued in Hmong culture and a couple's desire for many children has been the cultural norm (Detzner , Xiong, & Eliason, 1999; Walker, 1989). They are considered precious and need care not only for basic needs for subsistence but also for spiritual needs. The souls of babies and children are believed to be more prone to leaving their small bodies than the souls of adults (Caitlin & Swift, 1987). A baby thus is more susceptible to harm from spirits than adults and the decoration on baby carriers protects against both of these problems. Nevertheless, the meaning of specific motifs is not consistent across the Hmong population (White, 1982). The central panel decoration of crossing and interlocking appliqué can be interpreted as a path that keeps the souls in the body, thought to also represent the family's ancestors who help protect the child (Caitlin



& Swift, 1987; S. Xiong, personal communication, April 2007). The colorful and flowery appearance ‘hides’ the child from malevolent spirits (Adams, 1974). The amount of hand work and time that goes into making a baby carrier indicates the relative value placed on the care of infants and children. This baby carrier was completely hand stitched with very small stitches. The maker used commercially made cloth but the quality of the stitching and the larger number of small motifs were a significant investment of time.

#### *Baby carriers as symbol of women’s role in Hmong culture*

Women receive a baby carrier from their mother and/or mother-in-law when they marry or give birth to their first child (Cubbs, 1986; S Xiong, personal communication, April 2007). As a wedding gift, it signifies the role the bride is expected to fulfill as mother and the wish for her to have many children. Hmong men and women are not considered to be adults until they have children, and marriage is one step to adulthood which is fully reached with the birth of a child (Ranard, 2004; Walker, 1989). The baby carrier as a useful object also imparts expectations on the new parents about how they should take care of their baby. Even if many new parents never use the gifted baby carrier, it may be treasured as a gift from parents and as a work of Hmong cultural art, and all that comes with the meaning and making of Hmong textiles (S. Xiong, personal communication, April 2007).

The baby carrier as a textile object made by women taps into the culture and value of women’s handwork producing textiles and dress. Blue Hmong baby carriers require a

high level of skill to produce. The central panel is a batik fabric or a fabric that imitates the batik look by pattern or color. Making the intricate batik fabric is a time intensive process that needs total concentration (Mallinson, Donnelly & Hang, 1988). It cannot be picked up and put down like embroidery or other sewing. The process for even a simple pattern requires assembling the materials: cloth, beeswax, a way to melt it, one wax pen, dye stuffs, and dying equipment (Mallinson, Donnelly & Hang, 1988). The skill to produce batik is specialized and not all Blue Hmong women learned it. Therefore, batik fabric is the most likely component to be purchased from an artist based on availability and cash resources (Mallinson, Donnelly & Hang, 1988). Even though batik requires a specialized skill set it was still commonly seen in Blue Hmong textiles and clothing (Randall, J., 1985). Making batik continued to be practiced in the refugee camps (White, 1982). Batik was practiced by Blue Hmong but not White Hmong (Caitlin and Swift, 1987; Randall, 1985; Mallinson, Donnelly & Hang, 1988).

The general needlework skills needed to produce Hmong textiles were the purview of Hmong women (White, 1982). The textiles and clothing produced with these skills express a woman's artistry and industry (Lewis & Lewis, 1984). They also were an important indicator of a woman's diligence and care. Textiles are integral in the transition at major life stages in Hmong culture including birth, marriage, and death (White, 1982). Older girls and women are the custodians of this cultural transmission (White, 1982).

*Interpretation:*

Interpretation refers to the meaning and significance of artifact to the current place and time. “Interpretation will vary as the personal, class, ideological, and national interest of interpreters and their audiences vary” (Fleming, 1974, p. 161).

The value and meaning of Hmong baby carriers can be discussed at several levels. At a monetary level, I bought an all-handsewn Hmong baby carrier for between \$25 and \$30 in January of 2009. Depending on the financial resources of the purchaser, this may be a significant amount of money or a reasonable amount. As an identifier of Hmong people’s ethnic and traditional ways, baby carriers reinforce the perception of Hmong textiles as colorful and highly decorated. But this object is not often used in public anymore. So it would not have an opportunity to contribute to a non-Hmong person’s perception of the Hmong and their aesthetic preferences. The object reveals more about the ‘Hmong’ concepts of how to care for children both physically and spiritually than as a public expression of Hmong identity. Without knowing how common a gift the Hmong baby carrier is and how widespread the practice is, I can only speculate based on its availability in the St. Paul Hmong market that it has value within the Hmong community. Based on this research, I also speculate that today a Hmong baby carrier is more a symbolic gift than a gift given for its utility. It is symbolic of the older generations wish for their families to continue and to remind the couple that they are Hmong. Since the carrier is used in close proximity to the body, it creates an intimate connection between mother and child. The mother learns her child’s moods, needs, and behaviors without much effort. Hmong children are doted on and how better to dote than having them so

close. For spiritual protection, the carrier has symbols and motifs that protect the child from soul loss. For Hmong who have converted to Christianity, this aspect of the symbolic motifs on the baby carrier may not be valued or even welcomed. It may be enough of an association with non-Christian belief for a Christian Hmong to not use a Hmong baby carrier.

For Hmong studies scholars, the importance of the Hmong baby carrier is reflected in the change in its use from before immigration to today in the United States. By researching this object of Hmong material culture, the pre-immigration views of child care are understood within the context of Hmong culture. Since each generation of Hmong adapts more to the values and beliefs of American society, Hmong culture is changing. These changes can be seen in Hmong material culture like the Hmong baby carrier. Even though Hmong baby carriers are made with modern and often synthetic materials, the design still adheres to Hmong cultural tradition.

#### McClung Fleming Process on Group of Hmong Baby Carriers

The McClung Fleming process was also used to analyze the Hmong baby carriers as a group. To review, the process is composed of the five basic properties and the four operations on the basic properties. The basic properties include the objects' history, material, construction, design, and function. The four operations on the basic properties are identification, evaluation, cultural analysis, and interpretation. The process was carried out on the group as a whole versus each object because the variation between the carriers is subtle and the amount of variation does not warrant individual examination.

Since the McClung Fleming process was followed for the analysis of Hmong baby carrier H5.2002.125.271 in the first part of this chapter, some of the steps will be brief so as not to repeat what has already been stated.

### Basic Properties

#### *History:*

The basic property of history includes where and when the object was made, “by whom and for whom and successive changes in ownership, condition, and function” (Fleming, 1974, p. 156). Knowledge about each baby carrier is limited and therefore the property of history is limited. I present the known information about these baby carriers in the following section. Table 2 shows the time periods that the baby carriers were made, 7 by decade and 6 by century.

**Table 2: Date of carriers**

Date	N/A	20th C	1950’s	1980’s	1990’s	2000’s
	5	6	1	2	2	2

There are only three carriers with specific years noted in documentation: 1987, 2004, and 2009. There is too little information on dates for the carriers to speculate on this historical aspect. Looking at A87.8.1 which is the carrier from the 1950’s for comparison, several other carriers from the 20<sup>th</sup> century period are similar and could be just as old or older such as A87.8.1, CHS2, A90.1.33, and A90.1.32. See Appendix B for images of these baby carriers.

Table 3 shows the locations of the carriers.

**Table 3: Baby carrier location**

Location	N/A	Thailand	N. Thailand	Chiang Khan, Thailand	Chiang Mai, Thailand	Nong Het, Laos
	8	2	4	1	1	2

Since fewer than half of the carriers are documented with a known origin, it is difficult to make a definitive statement about the origin of all the carriers. Based on the known origin of eight carriers and the similarities of the carriers in general, it is conservative to say that all the carriers are either from Southeast Asia or made by people from this region. To add more doubt as to the origin of the carriers, the location of purchase may not be the location the carrier was made and used. Another layer obscuring an accurate assessment of the carriers location is that the four carriers from Northern Thailand were purchased from the same U. S. textile dealer who could have traveled all over the region, buying what she thought would sell to customers. Any Hmong baby carrier purchased in Thailand could be from the Thai Hmong and not the Lao Hmong refugees living in Thailand. The history of these two groups of Hmong has differed since their immigration out of China around 1800 which may explain some of the physical differences between the carriers.

**Table 4: Number of new versus used carriers**

Condition	New	Used
	9	9

The number of new versus used carriers are noted in Table 4. As can be seen in the photographs in Appendix B, some carriers were used heavily and have significant damage while others were more lightly used. The new carriers are easy to identify because they do not have straps and there is no evidence that straps were ever attached. All these Hmong baby carriers were made for the same function of caring for and carrying infants and small children to protect them from physical and spiritual harm.

*Material:*

All the carriers are made with fabric and thread. The fiber content of the fabrics are cotton, hemp, silk, and synthetic polyester or nylon. The embellishment is worked in the same materials plus synthetic yarn for the pompoms.

*Construction:*

All the carriers are flat piece construction by sewing. All but one baby carrier (H5.2004.278, Figure B15) is constructed into a shape produced from two rectangles. Six of the carriers also have the cloth straps attached that are used to hold the baby against the mother's torso. The front of the carriers is embellished with a variety of motifs executed with needle, thread, and fabric. The needlework techniques include: appliqué, reverse, appliqué, embroidery, and cross stitch. The front of the carrier has a border of many thin stripes and one large stripe on the outside edge. The back is unembellished and usually made from a plain piece of fabric: 14 black, one white, one dark blue, and the exceptions being two with flowery prints. All but one carrier is hand sewn (H5.2004.278). The workmanship of the sewing is very fine. The embellishments

on the front are done in blind stitch so they are barely visible. In contrast, the straps are attached with overhand stitch which is easy to see.

*Design:*

“Design includes structure, form, style, ornament, and iconography of the object”

(Fleming, 1974, p. 156). The structure and form of the carriers are similar. Three of the carriers have characteristics that do not fit within the Blue Hmong style of the other carriers. CHS2 (Figure B9) is different because the central panel is embellished in a diamond shape repeat cross stitch pattern surrounded by green cross stitch. The top panel of this carrier is cross stitched with a repeating diamond and snail pattern (Figure 14). This pattern could also be an elephant foot or rooftop (Dewhurst & MacDowell, 1983, p. 70-71). The director of the Hmong Studies Center said that this is a White Hmong style baby carrier.



Figure 14: CHS2 det11

H5.2004.278 (Figure 19) is different because it is not shaped like the others. Its shape is a simple rectangle. It is made of similar fabric with similar surface embellishments, batik with appliqué which are the main characteristics of Blue Hmong baby carriers. This



carrier is also the only carrier where the top panel is batik with red appliqué.

Documentation for this carrier identifies it as being from the eastern border of Laos and Vietnam, so it could be a Vietnamese Hmong style. A third carrier has a combination of needlework techniques that do not fit into the Blue Hmong style. The top panel of HCC2 (Figure 15) is embellished with reverse appliqué in a repeat snail and cross pattern.

Reverse appliqué is a technique known to be done by White Hmong. But the central panel is blue cloth with red appliqué in a pattern that is Blue Hmong. The mixing of these techniques and patterns may be attributed to the close contact between Hmong sub-groups while living in the refugee camps in Thailand.



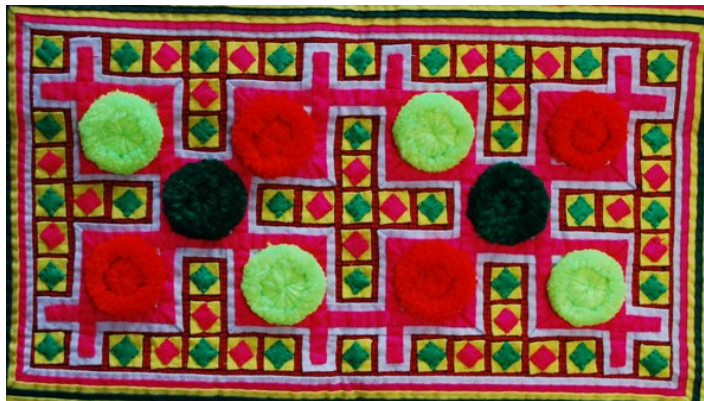
**Figure 15: HCC2 det22**

All the other carriers have the characteristics of Blue Hmong style baby carriers: shape, central panel color, and appliqué. With two of these carriers, the central panel is not dyed blue but is cross stitched with dark thread on white ground cloth to make it look like a batik pattern (H5.2002.125.272, Figure B12 and H5.2004.277, Figure B14). A second variation within this group of Blue Hmong style baby carriers is the use of appliqué and pompoms in a geometric pattern on the top panel seen on H5.2002.125.270 (Figure 17) versus embroidery in a counted long stitch seen on A87.8.1 (Figure 16). The counted long stitch is also found on A90.1.33 (Figure B4). A87.8.1 is dated in the 1950's and was

purchased in Chiang Mai Province, in Northern Thailand. A90.1.33 is 20<sup>th</sup> century and purchased in Northern Thailand. Based on the date of A87.8.1 and the purchase location, these carriers could be carriers from the Thai Hmong and not the Lao Hmong refugees who lived in camps in Thailand. The Hmong first started to migrate out of China and into Southeast Asia around 1800 (Ranard, 2004). They migrated into Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. Consequently, there are Hmong living in Thailand who migrated there much earlier than the Hmong refugees from Laos. The differences in the embellishment may be due to these carriers being made by Thai Blue Hmong.



**Figure 16: A87.8.1 det18**



**Figure 17: H5.2002.125.270 det14**

*Function:*

“Function embraces both the uses (intended functions) and the roles (unintended functions) of the object in its culture, including utility, delight, and communication” (Fleming, 1974, p. 156). The function of Hmong carriers examined as a group is not different than the function of Hmong baby carrier H5.2002.125.271 (Figure 2 and B11) discussed earlier.

### Operations

*Identification:*

All eighteen baby carriers were identified as Hmong by the organization that owns them either in accession reports or to me in person. The description of the baby carriers is based on descriptive characteristics that I documented and used to develop categories to select one carrier with the largest number of characteristics for individual analysis. The presentation of the characteristics is general. I only indicate specific baby carriers when its characteristic is unusual.

I developed a Baby Carrier Examination form to document the characteristics. The data included size, shape, fabric types, embellishment types, color, and special remarks. This information was entered into a spreadsheet and I sorted the data and analyzed it to develop 10 categories of characteristics. These categories are size, shape, overall color combination, central panel coloration, border color, corner notch color, central panel embellishment (appliqué/1 or 2 color, reverse appliqué, cross stitch), top panel embellishment (appliqué, embroidery), pompom use, ‘tooth’ border pattern.

The distribution within each of the main categories is as follows. Dimensions of the baby carriers range from 29.92 to 20 inches in height and 21.25 to 12.75 inches in width. Since only six of the eighteen carriers have straps attached, the strap dimensions were not included in overall size. Seventeen of the carriers are in a shape resembling two connected rectangles ( Figure 18). One large rectangle is oriented with the longest dimension being vertical and the second smaller rectangle is oriented with its longest edge horizontally along the top shorter edge of the large rectangle.

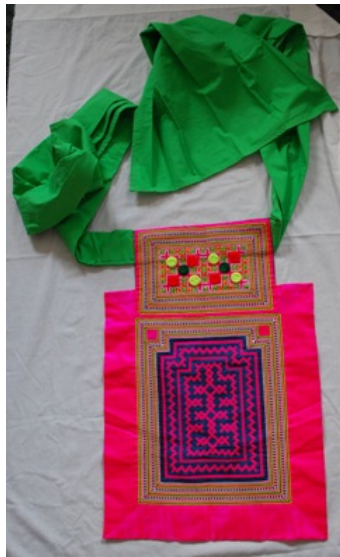


Figure 18: H5.2002.125.270



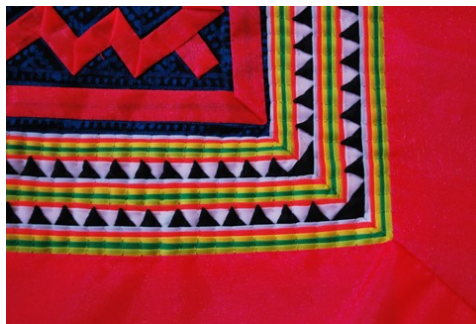
Figure 19: H5.2004.278

Only one carrier has a different shape which is a plain rectangle ( Figure 19). As stated previously, this carrier is from the eastern part of Laos near the Vietnam border.

Over all the baby carriers, there are six colors used: red, pink, blue, green, yellow, and white/cream. Three carriers had all six of these colors. Fourteen had five of the six

colors with the most common exclusion being red and pink. One carrier had four of the six colors. The color of the central panel ground fabric depends upon how the color was applied. Eight carriers have indigo blue batik central panels. Five carriers have black batik patterns printed on blue fabric. One carrier has a solid blue central panel. Four carriers have white central panels. Three of the carriers with white central panels are cross stitched in patterns to look like batik.

The borders on all the baby carriers have a wide border stripe and a set of narrow border stripes. On eleven of the carriers, the wide border stripe is red, while on seven it is pink. The narrow border stripes are the same colors used on the rest of the carrier. They usually are sewn in a repeat color pattern as seen on Figure 22 and Figure 23. There is a border variation, that I call the ‘tooth’ variation. The border has black triangles sewn into one of the narrow border stripes, which is usually white. They are made by folding small pieces of fabric into shape and inserting between narrow stripes (Figure 20). Two of the carriers have this variation, MAC (Figure 20) and H5.2002.125.270 (Figure B10).



**Figure 20: Tooth border variation**

The shape of the carriers' is repeated in the shape of the central panel. This produces a square or 'notch' in the border around the central panel ( Figure 21). On sixteen of the carriers, this 'corner notch' is an added piece of fabric ( Figure 22). On two carriers, the area is filled by the wide border stripe fabric (Figure 23). On ten of the carriers with the added notch, the same wide border stripe fabric is used. On the remaining six carriers with the added corner notch, two are a print fabric and one is cross stitched.



**Figure 21: A90.1.30 det1**



**Figure 22: A90.1.30 det2**



**Figure 23: A87.8.1 det4**

The central panels are embellished with appliqué (Figure 24) or cross stitch (Figure 25) or both (Figure 26). Thirteen carriers have one color of appliqué, four have two colors of appliqué, one has reverse appliqué, and six have cross stitch. The top panels are embellished as follows: appliqué (12), cross stitch (10), appliqué and cross stitch (4), counted long stitch (2). Yarn pompoms are also used as embellishment. Twelve of the eighteen have pompoms. They are most frequently attached to the top panel. Only one of the twelve carriers also had pompoms on the central panel.



**Figure 24: A90.1.30 det6**



**Figure 25: CHS2 det4**



**Figure 26: CHS1 det4**

### *Description of color*

To describe the colors of these baby carriers, the Munsell color system terms are used. A review of Munsell terms is in order. Hue describes the color family or color's name.

Value describes the quality of lightness or darkness of a color. And chroma describes the strength or intensity of the color. Another aspect of describing the color of fabric is that the texture of the fabric affects the perception of color. The color of a matte or rough surfaced fabric will appear lighter and grayer than the same color on smooth or shiny fabric. This effect is due to the angle that light is reflected back to the viewer. "The surface characteristics of an object, as well as its color, contribute a great deal to the feeling people have about an object" (Munsell, p. 37).

The colors used in the baby carriers are very consistent among carriers. Therefore, the description of the colors will be for the group of carriers. Also, the colors of the carriers were determined from photographs of the carriers using Munsell color charts. Since the color of photographs is not true to the color of the object being photographed, the color identification should not be considered definitive. A majority of the hues fall in four of



the five color families: red, yellow, green, and blue. The values tend to be in the low to middle range (2.5 - 6). The chroma of the hues tends to be higher than lower (10+). In the Munsell color notation, the hue family is represented by a number and one or two letters. Next is the value number follow by a slash (/) and the chroma number. The colors in the red hue family are 5R 4/20 and 5R 5/14. In the yellow hue family, the colors are 5Y 5/12 and 5Y 8/8. In the blue hue family, the colors are 5BP 4/18 and 5BP 4/8 (BP = blue purple). In the green hue family, the colors are 10GY8/12 and 5G 5/8 (GY = green yellow). With hues primarily in the middle to high chroma range and the middle to low value range, this means the color compositions of the baby carriers make them attractive to the eye. The attraction is further enhanced by the use of both matte and smooth fabric surfaces which adds another visual dimension to the baby carriers.

#### *Evaluation:*

The baby carriers generally have a high quality of hand stitching. One carrier is machine sewn. The straps are not sewn on in a way to hide the stitching, which is unlike the stitching on the front. Some of the fabrics are thinner and therefore seem less durable. The carriers made with synthetic fabric feel stiff yet too smooth, so smooth that it seems like the straps would not stay in place but would slip.

#### *Cultural analysis*

The following topics relate to the cultural analysis of Hmong baby carriers and were not discussed in the preceding analysis of the single baby carrier.

### *Symbol of pan-Hmong identity*

The new Hmong baby carriers available in St. Paul are Blue Hmong style. Only one carrier examined was identified as White Hmong style. It is curious that the Blue Hmong style is prominent in St. Paul. Conventions of dressing based on sub-group affiliation have gone through changes to the extent that young people feel free to mix elements from different sub-groups into a single ensemble (Lynch. 1999). Lynch found that young women preferred the Blue Hmong skirt because of the indigo color and embellishments (1999). Has this preference for more color influenced the style of baby carriers available in St. Paul? I do not have an answer but there are other possible explanations. Hmong dress has functioned as a visual symbol of Hmong identity pre- and post- immigration. Hmong baby carriers would have been part of a women's ensemble in Laos and Thailand. But they are not part of a women's ensemble today at Hmong events like the New Year celebration. Since the baby carrier is not used to display Hmong identity at Hmong events in St. Paul, it is possible that the style is no longer significant or meaningful. Since the Hmong baby carriers available for purchase in St. Paul are often made overseas in Laos, another explanation could be that the style is based on the sub-group affiliation of the maker. This topic could be the subject of further research.

### *Hmong writing in textiles*

There is a folktale that the Hmong lost their written script because the Han Chinese persecuted them and prevented them from using it (Ranard, 2004). To save the writing, Hmong women embroidered and batiked the script on the textiles making the script look like decorative motifs.

Yang Dao said, With the creativity of the Hmong women, the erosion of memory over time, and the dispersal of Hmong throughout the southern provinces of China, the Hmong writing system was gradually altered to become completely incomprehensible. The Hmong writing system disappeared from human memory, leaving only the Hmong paj ntaub ('flower cloth') as its legacy. (Ogden, 2008, p. 108)

Ogden explains that this popular myth of inscribing script onto textiles has supported the Hmong embroidery tradition and has become the most persistently recognizable symbol of Hmongness. This myth has been so generally accepted by the Hmong that over thirty years ago a group of men developed Hmong orthography by cataloging and categorizing the patterns from an extensive collection of paj ntaub (Ogden, 2008).

### *Interpretation*

The meaning and significance of these Hmong baby carriers is the same as the baby carrier examined earlier in this chapter. The one addition to the interpretation based on the group of carriers is that seventeen of these carriers were collected and preserved in St. Paul institutions. This means that people at these four institutions thought it was important to collect Hmong baby carriers and preserve them. I speculate that this is partly due to the fact that St. Paul has a large Hmong population. Three of the institutions are Hmong institutions where there is a vested interest in preserving a variety of Hmong artifacts.

### Conclusions

“...the dynamics of change in material objects as a function of changes in the society which produced them...” (McClung Fleming, 1974, p. 159).

This group of baby carriers demonstrates that the makers willingly used new materials and varied embellishment techniques in their designs. They used synthetic materials which tend to have brighter color than the natural fiber materials. The use of these materials means they were available for the maker to choose. Makers also used different needlework techniques to execute similar decorative patterns, which are seen in the baby carriers where cross stitch was sewn in patterns to look like batik. The batik look was also replicated by using printed fabric with batik patterns. For these two adaptations to occur, the economical and cultural contexts had to be amenable to the changes. From an economic stand point, the manufacturing infrastructure and consumer demand had to exist. I can only speculate on why the maker chose to cross stitch the pattern instead of batik fabric, but it is clear that the maker took the time to do the hand stitching to get the pattern that was desired. It could be that the maker used the materials that she had on hand, or she didn't have the cash to buy a printed or batik central panel, or these were the materials she was given to make the carrier. Culturally the central panel changes had to be acceptable to the people using the carriers, or they wouldn't have been made and used.

One of the most interesting observations is how similar all the carriers are to each other. This could be in part explained by the fact that most of the Hmong population in St. Paul came to the United States after living as refugees in Thailand. The camp experience was the first time that most of the Hmong had lived in close quarters with people of different clans and of different cultural background (White, 1982). Non-Hmong refugees seeking refuge from the fighting in Laos were also kept in the camps. Exposure to other styles of

baby carriers possibly helped develop a preference for the Blue style seen in this group of researched baby carriers. Only one carrier in the group, CHS2 (Figure B9) was identified as White Hmong style. Another White Hmong style documented with photographs in the Hmong literature is a reverse appliqué repeating spiral pattern. This may indicate that there are more styles than seen in this group of carriers from St. Paul.

The consistency of design and decoration of these baby carriers is not seen in Hmong special occasion dress. Lynch documented the dynamic world of dressing for Hmong New Year that young Hmong use to express their identity which includes mixing new designs and elements of White and Blue Hmong dress together. Over the past thirty years, the Hmong adapted to living in St. Paul. Yet, this group of Hmong baby carriers shows relatively little change. One explanation for this contradiction between Hmong special occasion dress and Hmong baby carriers may be that the carriers are not worn as a display of Hmong identity and that they are primarily purchased from and made in Southeast Asia.

## CHAPTER 5: FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW RESULTS

As a supplement to the material culture research on Hmong baby carriers, I conducted a focus group and individual interviews with 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Hmong women about their experiences with Hmong baby carriers. Both the focus group and individual interviews were conducted for scheduling flexibility. If a participant could not attend the focus group, I scheduled an individual interview with her. The literature on Hmong textiles is primarily from the immigrant generations' point of view and experience before and after immigration. To understand the changes in Hmong culture, it is important to elicit information from the younger generations. The same schedule of questions was asked of focus group participants and individual interviewees. I tested the schedule with a Hmong colleague for cultural and linguistic clarity. I showed the participants the Blue Hmong style baby carrier I own as a conversation starter and visual aid when talking about specific aspects of Hmong baby carriers. The focus group was conducted with five participants; four of them were college students and were not mothers, and one was a post-college age mother of one child. Three interviews were conducted with post-college age mothers of one or more children. The participants were not asked about their actual ages, but identified by age group defined as college age and post-college age. A second level of description for each participant is her as a mother or non-mother.

A number of themes came up in the interviews and focus group. These themes have been grouped under the following broader categories: use and knowledge about baby carriers, utility and function of baby carriers, experience with baby carriers, and object

attachment. Within each category, aspects of continuity and change on the topic are discussed.

The pronunciation and spelling of the word baby carrier in the Hmong language needs explanation. There are two Hmong dialects: Blue and White. In Blue Hmong, a baby carriers is spelled *hla nyia*. In White Hmong, it is spelled *daim nyias*. I have tried to use the correct spelling based on how the participants pronounced the word. Please note that use of one or the other pronunciation is not an accurate indication of whether the participant is Blue or White Hmong. One reason for this is that White Hmong is easier to learn<sup>4</sup> and is often the dialect of choice in Hmong language classes conducted in St. Paul<sup>5</sup>. Consequently, many of the younger Hmong I have met who speak Hmong learn and use White Hmong. The participants used the term Green Hmong when speaking to me. When directly quoting a participant, I will use the term they used. When I paraphrase their comments, I use the term Blue Hmong for reasons stated earlier (see footnote 1 on page 3).

## Analysis and Associations

### *Knowledge of baby carriers*

To find out what the participants knew about Hmong baby carriers, I asked the participants questions about the colors and designs of baby carriers. The theme on

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<sup>4</sup> At a Hmong student group program, this topic of Hmong dialects was brought up. I asked why Blue Hmong would speak White Hmong and several of the students said it was easier to learn.

<sup>5</sup> In a Hmong student group program meeting, I spoke to the Hmong language professor and learned that White Hmong was exclusively taught at that school. The professor said White Hmong was the dialect of choice in part because that is what she knew.

knowledge of baby carriers covers the physical and symbolic aspects of the Hmong baby carrier. The participants' responses covered color use, change in color, fabrics used, Blue and White Hmong styles, and meaning of motifs.

I asked participants about the colors of the Hmong baby carrier because the same colors are consistently used in the carriers that I have seen. Participants' responses also brought up the changes in colors and fabrics over time. IP1 and FGP4 talked about the customary use of red and green for much of the paj ntaub. IP1 said that the pink or reddish color is used for everything including the clothes and textiles made for family members' funeral rites. FGP4 said, "Well in the Hmong culture, red and green is like a really big color for us doing our cross stitches or the pa ndau that we do." FGP4 went on to say that she didn't know why the Hmong use red and green. Two participants brought up the color of the fabric straps, 'strings', or sash used on Hmong baby carriers. IP3 said "...you'll see green as a sash, really common on baby carriers". IP1 spoke about her mom attaching green straps to the carrier she gave IP1 when she had her first child. She said the straps can also be blue. IP3 and FGP4 talked about the colors changing from red and green to the brighter lime green and hot pink. IP3 said "...the brighter colors, are becoming more popular...modern styles of design has been incorporated...I know I saw green ones, purple ones...".

IP1, IP3, and FGP4 brought up the synthetic fabric used for baby carriers. IP1 said that her carrier didn't have the slippery fabric. IP3 said that the synthetic fabric is also used for Hmong clothing. She thought that people probably started using it for textiles and



clothing when they were living in the camps in Thailand. She also felt that using these fabrics was part of a slow move away from the tradition. FGP4 said that the synthetic fabric is “just the new style”.

I asked participants about the pattern and design of Hmong baby carriers. The responses brought up the different styles of Hmong baby carriers, motifs used, and their meaning. IP2 said, “I never knew that there was a Green Hmong and there was a White Hmong baby carrier too”. IP3 credited the baby carrier maker and ‘modern times’ for the differences in designs. She said that the carrier I showed her was the most common style in the Twin cities and that the black triangles in the borders indicate that it is the Green Hmong style. IP3 talked about the extensive sharing of sewing skills and clothing styles between the Blue and White Hmong. She knows about the sharing because her mother who is White Hmong told her about learning to sew Blue Hmong style while living in a village with Blue Hmong.

The motifs found on Hmong textiles are a common topic in literature on the subject of Hmong textiles and clothing. The meaning of the specific motifs is not consistent within the Hmong community even among the 1<sup>st</sup> generation. Nonetheless motifs were brought up when I asked about the patterns on Hmong baby carriers. FGP1 talked about the belief that the motifs protect the baby from spiritual harm which they believe can lead to illness and death. She knows the general idea but didn’t have any knowledge about specific motifs or names for the motifs. FGP1 said that her mother “says that little kids when they are a lot smaller they're not protected from the spirits, the bad spirits”. FGP1

says this is why the baby carrier is decorated with pompoms so as to disguise the child as a flower so the bad spirits can't harm them. IP1, FGP2, and IP2 said that they didn't know about this aspect of baby carriers.

You know I have never thought about that piece of it, and I guess I say I've never thought about it because I just kind of took it as, this is a baby carrier, use it, it's a beautiful art piece, and I didn't think of it further than that. (IP2)

IP3, who was particularly knowledgeable about textiles, brought up Hmong writing on textiles and Chinese Hmong using motifs about their origin myth on textiles. She said that the Hmong believe that the lost Hmong written script was incorporated into Hmong textiles surface design because of the Chinese domination and oppression over the Hmong. While looking at my Hmong baby carrier she said, "These little curves here could mean a letter, but we don't know what they're for because they get intermixed and it gets lost because of the oppression from the Chinese" (IP3). IP3 said that the Chinese Hmong commonly use butterfly and dragon motifs because of their association with the Hmong origin myth.

An explanation for some of the participants' lack of knowledge about the meaning of the physical aspects of Hmong baby carriers' may be that few younger Hmong women learn to sew Hmong textiles like the 1<sup>st</sup> generation did. The participants with children tended to know more about the symbolism of the decorative motifs and their protective nature than the non-mothers.

From talking to the participants, there are some aspects of Hmong baby carriers that have not changed and some that have. The colors are primarily still in the same color family as they were in the past but now they are brighter. New colors that are not traditional, like purple, can be found on baby carriers. There has been a change to bright colors and new colors. There has been a corresponding change in fabric from basic cotton and other natural fibers to synthetic fabrics. The synthetic fabrics are shiny and can be dyed in brighter shades of color. These changes in fabric and color affect the visual aesthetics of Hmong baby carriers.

#### *Utility and functions of baby carriers*

The theme, utility and functions of Hmong baby carriers cover the physical and social aspects of baby carriers. I asked participants when would a baby carrier be used and when wouldn't it be used. Participants talked about using a baby carrier while doing household chores, based on a child's behavior, as a tool for bonding, for spiritual protection, changes in the pattern of use of Hmong baby carriers, and change in Hmong family values. Two functions of Hmong baby carriers that participants brought up in response to other questions are the Hmong baby carrier as a gift and as art.

A lively discussion point was the use of baby carriers when a mother needs to do household chores and tasks that require both hands, with the added benefit of keeping a child close and safe. Five participants talked about the convenience of using a baby carrier while doing chores. FGP4 said that her grandmother used a baby carrier when she needed to cook and wash dishes and when no one else was home to watch the child.

Freshly cooked food is highly valued by the Hmong, even for breakfast. This means that the mother and oldest or older daughters spend a significant amount of time preparing food for three meals a day. The preparation time is even greater for a large extended family. IP2 also talked about how her mother used a carrier while doing chores and that it was a way to keep the child safe. FGP2 said that if necessary a mother could carry two children, one on the back and one in front. IP1 said that her mother-in-law used to tell her that “You guys don’t know, that’s [baby carrier] like our lifesaver in Laos. We would have them [the child] on our back to the garden, at home, everywhere we went”. It is clear from IP1’s recounting of her mother-in-law’s comment that Hmong baby carriers had a high degree of utility in Laos.

We discussed how a baby carrier can be used based on a child’s behavior. IP3 talked about not trusting her young son to keep out of mischief so she would put him in a baby carrier. IP3 said that even though he is over a year old, his maternal grandmother still puts him in a carrier too because she is afraid he will misbehave by climbing on things. I was speaking with a Hmong woman when I was recruiting for participants and she told me a story about her sister and her nephew. She said that her nephew had a habit of getting unruly and being hard to calm down. So her sister trained him to know that he would be put in a Hmong baby carrier if he didn’t calm down. The woman said that as soon as her sister takes the baby carrier out, her nephew calms down. Her sister didn’t even have to put him in it anymore to change his behavior. Putting a child in a baby carrier is one way parents and grandparents can control a child’s behavior and keep them safe.

FGP1 brought up the topic of the Hmong baby carrier as a tool for bonding with a child. FGP1's mother-in-law used a carrier while taking care of the participant's daughter. FGP1 said that her mother-in-law and FGP1's daughter have a special and close relationship. She believes that the physical closeness of using a baby carrier promotes an emotionally close relationship. FGP1 said, "You have that physical like connection right away. So she's really close to her grandma." She also thinks the child finds comfort in being physically close to the adult. IP1 also talked about physical closeness and warmth between the child and the adult. She said, "And it's a really nice feeling.... So the only way to actually have that comfort [when we are busy] is to put them on our back." IP1 said that all of her children like to be carried and see it as a reward.

FGP1 brought up that Hmong baby carriers also protect the baby or child from spiritual harm. Hmong believe that illness can be caused by bad spirits disturbing a person's souls. FGP1 said that her mother told her about disguising the baby as a flower with the pompoms so that the bad spirits wouldn't take or disturb the baby's souls (Caitlin & Swift, 1987). This function may not be as important as it once was before immigration due to conversion to Christianity and the decrease in infant mortality,

I asked participants about when they or their family would use a Hmong baby carrier and when they would not. These questions were to elicit the participants' ideas about how the use of Hmong baby carriers had changed. I asked follow-up probe questions to get detailed responses. Their responses brought up generational differences in child care

practices, access to a variety of child care apparatuses, change in family residential patterns, and the difference in how busy people are before and after immigration.

Another factor in the change in use of Hmong baby carriers that was brought out with these questions was how Hmong baby carriers draw attention of non-Hmong when worn in public. On this topic, IP3 talked about Hmong family values being passed down in her family but not in many other Hmong families she knows.

IP2 and IP1 talked about the differences between generations. IP2 said that “a lot of the younger moms and dads, instead of using a baby carrier that their parents would give them”, they would rather buy and use an American style baby carrier. IP1 talked about her generation, the younger generation not using Hmong baby carriers because her generation has become Americanized. She also said that young parents don’t use Hmong baby carriers because they want to be independent and want their children to be independent which is more an American cultural value than a Hmong cultural value. IP1 and IP2 talked about younger parents and some households not owning a Hmong baby carrier. FGP2 said that some families, like hers, just don’t use Hmong baby carriers anymore. Her mother carried her in one but not her 4 year-old and 5 year-old half siblings.

Living in urban Saint Paul with many retail outlets means that other apparatuses can be purchased to transport and care for babies and children whether they are carrier style, stroller style, or some other style. Some styles are more adaptable to the urban needs of people than the Hmong style carrier such as traveling by car and needing a car seat. I

asked participants what apparatuses were used by them or their families. IP1 talked about younger parents using strollers or other styles of baby carrier available at Wal-mart. FGP4 said that her mom uses a play pen for her younger half siblings. FGP1 said that “we see that there are other things you can use to take care of your baby.” FGP2 talked about people buying and using what is available in the stores.

Two participants talked about the changes in residential patterns as impacting the use of Hmong baby carriers. FGP2 said that there are no grandparents in her household, so the influence of that generation to use a Hmong baby carrier isn't there. I interpret her comment to mean that there is a difference between nuclear and extended families in what apparatuses are used to care for children. In a nuclear family, the parents decide how to care for the child. But in an extended family, the grandparents exert influence on care and are likely to use a Hmong baby carrier. FGP4 agreed with FGP2 and said that her grandmother who lives with them uses a Hmong baby carrier when she takes care of the younger grandchildren, because that is what she used when she raised her own children.

IP2 talked about the difference in how busy people are before and after immigration as influencing the use of Hmong baby carriers. She said, “I also think that in this country we have less to do than what our mothers used to have to do, so if we don't use the baby carrier it's okay” because we can just carry the baby in our arms. Her comment indicates that she doesn't have to multi-task as much as her mother's generation did before immigrating.

The attention from non-Hmong was given as the main reason for not using a Hmong baby carrier in public. Hmong baby carriers are brightly colored and have bold patterns which attract attention. IP1, IP2, and FGP4 talked about different aspects of the attention a Hmong baby carrier elicits in public. IP1 described the attention as ranging from people staring to people asking questions about the carrier. She said that her mother wasn't comfortable using a Hmong baby carrier "in public because a lot of people stare at you". IP2 said that her mother used a carrier in public when her family first came to the United States. She thought that since her mother was new to the United States that she just behaved as she had before immigration. When IP2 had her first child during high school, her mother sent her to school carrying her baby in a Hmong baby carrier. Today, IP2 doesn't usually use a Hmong baby carrier in public and she isn't sure why. IP1 talked about where she is and isn't comfortable using a Hmong baby carrier. She takes a baby carrier wherever she goes and uses it "at the [summer Hmong] soccer tournament or ... the New Year or at a family gatherings at the park I would use it with my own people around me". She isn't comfortable using a Hmong baby carrier while shopping in the general public. But IP1 said that she prefers a Hmong carrier to other styles of carrier and if needed, she could cover the Hmong carrier with a blanket "and nobody would be questioning me...because they wouldn't see it".

FGP4 brought up another aspect of using a Hmong baby carrier in public that relates to Hmong social expectations of behavior when in public. She said that some Hmong judge the Hmong who use a Hmong baby carrier in public. FGP4 said they are viewed



differently because this is a practice relegated to the home and not in public. None of the other participants echoed this sentiment or responded to her statement. But I can understand how expectations of behavior could vary depending on the wave of immigration in which a person had come to the United States and how long they had lived here. Older waves of Hmong immigrants may have adapted to the United States to the extent that a new wave of Hmong immigrants could be seen as old-fashioned or rural instead of urban like the Hmong living in Saint Paul.

IP3 was particularly vocal about what she calls Hmong values that are grounded in Hmong history and culture that are not being passed down to the younger generations. She talked about baby carriers and textiles as one of the few things that Hmong women were able to bring with them on their exodus from China. She said, “even though the patterns might be slightly different....overall it is still a baby carrier.” She said that it is the responsibility of the family to teach and practice the tradition of value in the family. She feels that people have become more American and individualistic which greatly impacts the Hmong community. She acknowledges that accommodations have to be made to live a ‘modern life’ in the United States. In reviewing her comments, I think her point of view goes directly to the changes in the use of Hmong baby carriers in the St. Paul Hmong population. Each wave of Hmong immigrants have adapted to life in the United State to various levels. The utility and function of the Hmong baby carriers in context of Laos and Thailand are not the same as the utility and function of the Hmong baby carrier in the United States. Like the Hmong who adapted to living in the United States, the use of Hmong baby carriers has been adapted also.

Two functions of Hmong baby carriers are as a gift and as art. Hmong women typically receive a Hmong style baby carrier as a wedding gift or when she has her first child (Cubbs, 1986). The woman's mother gives her one and sometimes her mother-in-law will give her a second one. Receiving a baby carrier as a wedding gift symbolizes the desire for the couple to have many children (Detzner , Xiong, & Eliason, 1999; Walker, 1989). Getting married and having children are expected in part because Hmong culture follows patrilineal descent principals (Weinstein-Shr & Henkin, 1991). Individuals are expected to continue the family by having children. Receiving a baby carrier upon having the first child implies a culturally appropriate method of care. Hmong children are cherished and seen as a joy. Young children are doted on and pampered. Having children also marks a transition in status for the parent to full adulthood with responsibility (Detzner , Xiong, & Eliason, 1999).

The participants who are mothers – FGP1, IP1, IP2, and IP3 – all talked about receiving one or more Hmong style baby carriers. When FGP1 received her carriers at the birth of her daughter, one from her mother and one from her mother-in-law, they told her the carriers were to use to care for her daughter. IP1 talked about the convention of getting carriers as gifts and that the carriers were given to help the new mother take care of the baby. IP3 said that the maternal grandparents are responsible for giving a carrier to the first child born to the couple. IP1 and IP3's comments indicate different ideas about who is the recipient of the gift, the mother or the child. Yet how the carrier is used has not changed. The mother or another adult carries the child in the carrier. IP3 talked about the

giving of a baby carrier as a tradition practiced in her family “over the years and generations” and still practiced today. But she also said that over time, other Hmong families are not giving baby carriers to brides or new mothers.

A change in the tradition of giving baby carriers is the giving of a carrier at the birth of each grandchild. Two participants talked about this. FGP1 talked about how in her family, her parents were given carriers for each child. Her mother gave her the carrier from her childhood. Her mother even wrote the participant’s name on the baby carrier. IP2 talked about receiving a new carrier for each one of her four children. She credits this change to her parents having money available to purchase multiple carriers which wasn’t true in the past.

IP2, who is Blue Hmong, talked about a reciprocity ritual that was part of her family tradition for receiving the baby carrier from her parents. The expectation is that when she and her husband are middle aged, they will take a pig to her parents’ house and a ritual will be preformed as a thank you for the baby carrier. She and her husband have discussed the need to save money for the ritual because they will have to do it eventually. But since they are still young and her parents have not ‘pushed it’, they have time to save up. For guidance, she and her husband will need to consult the elders of his family who know about the ritual. She clarified that this reciprocity ritual is not part of all Blue Hmong tradition. Her mother told her that this ritual is something that “our Green Hmong” do. Differences in rituals are an important way the Hmong distinguish themselves from other Hmong groups. IP2 knows from her White Hmong friends that

they do not practice this ritual. Even though her friends don't have to conduct the ritual, she doesn't feel the expectation of conducting the ritual as negative, just something she needs to do.

I asked the women with children if they would continue the tradition and give a baby carrier to their own children. IP2 said that it wouldn't hurt to give Hmong baby carriers to her children even if they didn't use them. She said that the carriers are beautiful Hmong art that her children could pass down to their own children. For IP2, Hmong baby carriers have become more than a functional way to carry children. As Hmong art, they embody Hmongness.

Participants IP2 and IP3 were vocal about their view of textiles as art. They expressed the value of textiles as art in different ways. When asked about giving a Hmong baby carrier to her daughter, IP2 said, "I really do believe that it's a beautiful art piece too, so even if they don't use it they can still keep it and... pass it on..." She went on to say that she thought of Hmong baby carriers more as artwork than for their intended function. IP3 talked about when she came to the realization that textiles were art. She said that she had "never thought textiles could be considered art." But thought "Yeah, it's part of art...all fashion is part of walking arts, clothing are (*sic*) arts." IP3 also lamented the fact that old textiles are re-made into objects such as purses and that textile artists do not sign their work. She has encouraged her mother to date and sign the textiles that she made.

In reviewing this theme on the utility and function of Hmong baby carriers, I have found that some aspects of the carriers have maintained continuity with use in the past and some have changed. Hmong baby carriers are still used to care for babies while doing chores, child safety, and as a gift. The Hmong baby carrier fits the lifestyles and environment of the Hmong living in Laos and Thailand. In the United States, it does not fulfill all needs of parents living in an urban environment. The younger generations may not believe in bad spirits to the extent that the 1<sup>st</sup> generation does, so spiritual protection is not a high priority function. Thinking of the Hmong baby carrier as a symbolic gift instead of a functional gift and as a work of art changes its role in Hmong culture.

#### *Experience with Hmong baby carriers*

While talking to the participants about their experiences using Hmong baby carriers, it became clear that this was an important topic. In the focus group, there was much discussion and laughing together about using a baby carrier. My impression was that using a carrier was such a common experience for this group of women that it gave them a sense of camaraderie. All of the focus group participants and one interview participant are what I call the ‘oldest/older daughter’ in their families. I will address this in detail later. Experience with Hmong baby carriers can be part of a Hmong girl’s childhood play if she was given a Hmong baby doll carrier. These are small replicas of the full size Hmong baby carrier.

Being the oldest or an older daughter is a position in the family that comes with expectations and duties. As an oldest daughter, a girl is expected to help her mother by

cooking, cleaning, and taking care of younger children. Therefore an oldest daughter is likely to have used a baby carrier to care for younger siblings. The focus participants discussed and laughed about using a baby carrier on the front and back, meaning on the front of the body or the back of the body. The women who had used a carrier on the front expressed a sense of pride. I know from looking at pictures that newborns and infants are carried on the front and older children on the back. I think that the sense of pride of carrying on the front comes from being trusted to care for a young baby.

FGP5 talked about having seven younger siblings and using a baby carrier on the front and back. FGP3 started using a baby carrier when she was around nine years old. She also said that she has used a carrier on the front and back. FGP1 talked about using a baby carrier and that “it's a huge part of just growing up as a child when you're the oldest, you use it to carry their (*sic*) siblings around to help your mom.” FGP2 didn't carry siblings but younger cousins and dolls. She said, “...it was just for fun, so like for me, my memories are just for fun, like trying to be like my mom.” IP3 said that it was practical and an expectation that older daughters would help parents with the younger children.

IP2 and IP1 were exceptions to the oldest/older daughter experience. They are oldest/older daughters but did not take care of younger siblings. IP2 said about her experience “I'm a pretty spoiled daughter.” IP1, who is the second oldest daughter in her family, didn't carry her younger siblings or have to do heavy work because she was small and her parents thought she was too weak for the tasks.

Participants brought up some pluses and minuses of using a Hmong baby carrier. Some participants had conflicting views of how comfortable or easy it is to use a carrier. They also talked about the danger associated with using a baby carrier. IP3 said that Hmong baby carriers are durable enough to last through her mother carrying all her siblings. IP2 thought that using a Hmong baby carrier was easier than using a stroller ‘because it’s just easier to swing them around onto your back’ in the carrier. IP1 said that some minuses about using a baby carrier are getting her hair pulled, getting scratched, or getting drooled on. FGP2 and IP2 talked about the stamina needed to use a baby carrier. IP2 said, “...it was very hard on my shoulder and very hard on my back. I could only carry him for fifteen minutes [at] the most and I can’t do it no [sic] more”. She carries her kids now and then but not like her mother-in-law did with her children, all day long. FGP2 said that in “... just 30 minutes of it is really exhausting.” She doesn’t know how her mom was able to carry a child all day long. IP1 talked about not wearing certain clothes when she uses a baby carrier. She said that tank tops don’t provide enough shoulder coverage to protect her skin from the straps.

IP1 talked about the different views of using a Hmong baby carrier between her sister and a female acquaintance who recently immigrated from Thailand. Her sister was given Hmong baby carriers as gifts but has never used them. The sister doesn’t understand why IP1 bothers to use them. But IP1 says she used them, “Because they’re actually good.” When IP1 met a recently immigrated Hmong woman, they were both using baby carriers with their youngest children. They laughed with each other over seeing each other use

Hmong baby carriers. They both thought the carrier was very useful, but the immigrant women commented on how few young mothers she saw use them in St. Paul.

The participants expressed a concern about the dangers of using a baby carrier. One danger is hurting the baby if the carrier isn't tied correctly. FGP2 said, "You have to know how to tie it because if you don't you can choke your baby or you can break their leg... so, it's going to take a lot of practice." Even though most of the participants are oldest daughters who have used a carrier with their mother's supervision, they were concerned of not 'knowing the right way' to use a carrier to prevent injury. They lack confidence in their ability to use a Hmong baby carrier. FGP4 said that because she didn't feel experienced enough in using a baby carrier that she would need a second person to help her. IP2 said that she didn't carry her first child in a carrier as an infant because he was so small, but she used a carrier when he was a little bigger.

FGP1 said that cooking with a baby in a carrier can be dangerous because the baby can grab things that would be out of reach if the baby were closer to the ground. FGP1 said that her mother-in-law, a first generation immigrant liked to use a baby carrier with FGP1's daughter when she was an infant for safety and being close enough to pay attention to how the baby was doing and if she needed any care. The three participants who talked about the dangers do not have children and maybe, like IP1, would feel more confident using a baby carrier if the child were older and bigger.



Four participants talked about Hmong baby doll carriers. These smaller versions of the full size Hmong baby carriers are made from the same fabrics and with the same surface embellishments. I saw them for sale at the Hmong market on Marion St. in St. Paul. FGP4 said, "...whenever my siblings wanted to carry their baby doll, she (her mother) would take out the smaller one for them." FGP2 said that she used a baby doll carrier when she was a child. IP3 said, "... I remember as a child my mom, she makes a little mini version you know for us to play house and stuff..."

The Hmong baby doll carriers function to socialize girls into adult gender roles just like baby doll strollers do for non-Hmong. These little carriers encourage emulation of adult women and in the context of play teaches them how to care for babies.

Within the theme of experience with baby carriers, I found that some women's experience with baby carriers starts early in childhood while playing with dolls. Other women especially oldest/older daughters start in later childhood by carrying younger siblings. All the participants had used baby carriers either in later childhood or as a mother. Even though they had experience using Hmong baby carriers, some of the non-mothers had concerns about safety. Since the participants grew up in the United States, their experience with Hmong baby carriers is different than the 1<sup>st</sup> generation Hmong women. The environment in Laos where the Hmong lived was mountainous and isolated so transportation was primarily by foot. Hmong girls in Laos probably used a baby carrier so much that when the time came to carry their own child, they felt confident.

### *Object attachment*

Object attachment theory is pertinent to this research as defined in the literature review of research on methods and forms of attachment to objects. Adults can become attached to an object for nostalgia or memories of a time, person, or place. Another type of attachment theory explains what toddlers experience when they have a favorite object for comfort when physically away from their mothers. Both of these forms of attachment were talked about by the participants.

Four participants talked about nostalgia and Hmong baby carriers. Two participants expressed nostalgia for being carried by talking about their mothers carrying them in a carrier and then using the same carrier with the grandchildren. IP1 said that she gets a nice feeling when her mother says, “You know, I used these [baby carriers] on all you guys, and now I get to use it on your kids.” FGP1 said, “...it just warms my heart when I see one [a Hmong baby carrier] because it reminds me of childhood and reminds me...[that] my mom carried like all of us in it and then like carrying our nieces and nephews in it.” FGP2 talked about getting to be carried in a baby carrier but that her younger siblings didn’t. IP1 hopes that by exposing her children to being carried in a Hmong baby carrier that they will one day reminisce about being carried. But IP1 doesn’t let them play with her baby doll carrier, “Because I don’t want them to lose it and I really treasure it.”

Three participants talked about treasuring the Hmong baby carrier that their mothers used to carry them. FGP1 said that her mother gave her the baby carrier from her childhood.

She said that her mother wrote FGP1's name on the carrier so that FGP1 would know it was hers. IP2 told her mother not to throw away the family baby carrier because it was used to carry her, all her siblings, and the grandchildren. IP1 talked about her mother encouraging her to keep her childhood baby doll carrier and full size carrier "because you'll look back at it one day and be really glad that you have it." IP1 would like to have her mother's baby carrier to pass down to her own children.

Two participants talked about their observations of toddlers being attached to a Hmong baby carrier. They think that some children are comforted by baby carriers. IP3 called the Hmong baby carrier a version of a 'blankie' referring to a security blanket that a child carries. IP3 said that her mother has multiple carriers because some of her grandchildren like to carry one around for comfort. IP3 and IP1 told me stories about toddlers pulling a carrier out of storage and taking it to an adult because the toddler wanted to be carried.

## Conclusion

To understand the changes in perception and use of Hmong baby carriers, it was important to elicit information from 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Hmong. By talking with eight Hmong women from these generations, I gained an understanding of what aspects of Hmong baby carriers have maintained continuity with the past and which have changed. The balance between continuity and change varies in the four main themes developed from the participants' responses: knowledge of baby carriers, utility and function of baby carriers, experience with baby carriers, and object attachment. In the knowledge of baby

carriers theme, two participants stood out for their knowledge about certain aspects of Hmong baby carriers.

FGP1 knew that Hmong baby carriers could protect the child from spiritual harm. IP3 was very knowledgeable about Hmong textiles and meanings associated with motifs. A significant change between the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations experience and the 1<sup>st</sup> generation experience in relation to Hmong textiles and specifically Hmong baby carriers is knowing how to make them. This area crosses over into the theme dealing with experience with baby carriers. For the 1<sup>st</sup> generation, having textile production skills was a matter of survival and cultural competence. Since the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation no longer require these skills, their relationship with Hmong baby carriers is as a user not as a maker. Therefore their knowledge of aspects related to making Hmong baby carriers is superficial compared to the 1<sup>st</sup> generation of Hmong. Women develop an intimate and personal relationship with Hmong baby carriers when they become mothers because it helps them take care of and bond with their child.

Continuity and change under the theme of utility and function of baby carriers is more balanced. The physical aspects of Hmong baby carriers are consistent in respect to the intended function of caring for babies and children. The changes in utility have to do with the change in context from a rural to an urban environment and living within a culturally diverse population who behave differently. The social functions of the Hmong baby carrier have become more symbolic as a gift and as art.

Within the theme of object attachment, I am limited to the participants' responses to assess continuity and change between generations. But some participants did talk about their mothers enough to reveal that their mothers encouraged them to keep Hmong baby doll carriers and to use full size Hmong baby carriers with their children. I speculate that the 1<sup>st</sup> generation of Hmong had a number of challenges to keeping baby carriers to pass down. Since baby carriers were used daily unlike special Hmong clothing, they would have worn out over time. In Laos, the Hmong lived by subsistence farming and growing limited cash crops. This lifestyle would not have provided the resources to have extra cash. Extra cash was likely 'invested' into more important items of cultural display in Laos and Thailand, such as silver necklaces. Therefore, encouraging daughters to hold onto Hmong baby carriers and having the resources to do so would be a new experience.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of researching Hmong baby carriers was to gain a deeper understanding of Hmong culture in transition. This research was grounded in material culture theory and utilized the McClung Fleming process of artifact analysis. Eighteen baby carriers in St. Paul, Minnesota were examined, documented, and analyzed. These carriers were quite similar in design, materials, and construction techniques. As part of the research process, the common characteristics of Hmong baby carriers were determined. They were consistent in shape, color, embellishment design, and motifs. By following the McClung Fleming process of artifact analysis on the Hmong baby carrier with the largest number of common characteristics, I was then able to compare all eighteen baby carriers to each other. In addition to the material culture analysis, a focus group and interviews were conducted with eight college age and post-college age Hmong women. I asked the Hmong women about their knowledge and use of Hmong baby carriers so I could compare their experience to that of the 1<sup>st</sup> generation of Hmong immigrants whose experience is documented in the literature on the Hmong.

### *Conclusions about the McClung Fleming Model for Artifact Analysis*

The material culture approach was the basis for this research on Hmong baby carriers. McClung Fleming says, “The artifacts made and used by people are not only a basic expression of that people; they are, like culture itself, a necessary means of man’s self-fulfillment” (McClung Fleming, 1974, p. 153). Material culture studies focus on the object in relation to the people and culture that produced and used it. The object as a product of a culture reflects the cultural values and beliefs of the people. Hmong baby

carriers are the primary source of information about the Hmong who made and used them.

The McClung Fleming model used for this research has two parts: classification of basic artifact properties and a series of operations performed on the properties. The five basic properties of the artifact are history, material, construction, design, and function. The operations are identification, evaluation, cultural analysis, and interpretation of the artifact. The material culture approach was supplemented with a focus group and interviews of 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Hmong women to elicit their experience with Hmong baby carriers.

The flexibility of the McClung Fleming model allowed me to focus closely on one Hmong baby carrier and also examine eighteen carriers as a group for comparison. By using the model in this way, I was able to document the range and frequency of baby carrier characteristics. I found that I incorporated the bulk of the information from the literature in the cultural analysis and interpretation operations on the single carrier. When I performed those operations on the group of carriers I abbreviated the operations by only discussing the aspects of Hmong baby carriers, that were not addressed in the analysis of the single carrier.

#### *Conclusions about Physical Characteristics of the Hmong baby carriers*

The eighteen Hmong baby carriers examined for this research did not demonstrate the range of variation of physical characteristics of Hmong baby carriers documented in the

literature on Hmong textiles and clothing. Looking at the physical characteristics noted in Appendix C, the overall design is consistent while the variation occurs in the details of motifs and embellishment techniques. Examples of this variation are seen on the top panel of HCC2 (Figure 15) which is a spiral reverse appliqué pattern, and in the more common design on H5.2002.125.272 (Figure 10) with a rectangular appliqué pattern with cross stitch in the background and pompoms. Keeping in mind the limited information about location and date of the carriers, changes over time in textile fibers from cotton and other natural fibers to synthetic fibers can be seen. A change that accompanies the incorporation of synthetic fibers is the addition of bright synthetic colors to the more subdued colors used on natural fibers.

*Conclusions about the relationship between Hmong baby carriers and Hmong women.*

The onset and development of Hmong women's relationship to Hmong baby carriers is different between the 1<sup>st</sup> generation and the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. When 1<sup>st</sup> generation Hmong women were children, they learned about baby carriers within the context of learning to produce clothing and textiles for their family or for sale. Generations 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> of Hmong women living in St. Paul generally do not learn the skills to make textiles and clothing like the 1<sup>st</sup> generation did when they were young. For the younger generations, their relationship with baby carriers starts when they begin carrying younger siblings or cousins as a helper to their mothers. A more intimate relationship with a baby carrier starts when a young Hmong woman uses one to carry her own child.



The development of object attachment to Hmong baby carriers differs between the 1<sup>st</sup> generation and the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation because of the different contexts. The 1<sup>st</sup> generation relationship with Hmong baby carriers is incorporated into their sense of self as the creator (Belk, 1988). “The creator retains an identity in the object for as long as it retains...[an] association” with the maker (Belk, 1988. p. 150). As the creator of Hmong baby carriers, 1<sup>st</sup> generation women also invest large quantities of what Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton calls ‘psychic energy’ in to the object (1981). While the women are spending time working on the carriers, they cannot expend energy on anything else. The time and focus spent on the object gives it a value to the creator, and I would go further and say that in some contexts, it also gives value to the culture. For the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations, Hmong baby carriers become part of the self through the process of mastery (Belk, 1988). Through learning to use the object, it becomes part of the extended self (Belk, 1988).

For the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation mothers, the connection to the Hmong baby carrier has an added dimension in that it is associated with their child for whom they have strong feelings. Possessions have the ability to store our feelings and memories that attach to our sense of selves (Boschetti, 1995). Each mother’s baby carrier will forever be a reservoir of memories and feelings about her children. She may appreciate the baby carrier for its day to-day utility and function but over time its value may increase based on the associated memories.

### *Conclusions about a Hmong baby carrier as a gift*

Based on the interviews, the four 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation mothers were all given Hmong baby carriers at the birth of their first child. The participants' mothers fulfilled their responsibility to provide a baby carrier. A Hmong woman's status changes when she becomes a mother. At that time, she becomes an adult in the eyes of the Hmong community. Gifting extends the self for both the giver and the receiver (Belk, 1988). "A gift continues to be associated with the giver so that the giver's identity is extended to include the recipient" (Belk, 1988, p. 150). Based on this idea of self extension via a gift, when a mother gives her daughter a Hmong baby carrier, the mother's identity extends to include the daughter. Since most gifts are given by loved ones, receipt of the gift is generally a positive extension of self (Belk, 1988). I found that the participants who had received baby carriers spoke positively about being given the carrier.

Three participants went further, talking about having or wanting the carrier that their mother used to carry them and their siblings. This type of possession that is passed down generation to generation is what Boschetti calls symbolic of the historical self. These possessions "link individual lives across a span of time, preserving family continuity and the individual's place within the extended family structure" (Boschetti, 1995, p. 7). The baby carriers that the participants spoke about may not have been passed down through multiple generations but the participants did express positive feelings for what I would call the maintenance of family tradition and therefore continuity with the past.

### *Conclusions about Hmong Identity and Hmong Baby Carriers*

Only one of the Hmong carriers examined for this research was identified as White Hmong. Blue Hmong style carriers are the dominant style of new carriers available at the Hmong market in St. Paul. As mentioned in Chapter 5, there are a number of probable explanations for this style dominating the market. I asked the focus group and interview participants about baby carrier design and style. None of them expressed knowledge about different sub-group styles. It could be that due to the fact that Hmong baby carriers are used almost exclusively in the home, they have not had the opportunity to see very many Hmong carriers. The carrier that they would be familiar with would be their family's carrier. Since the participants were not familiar with other carrier styles, I speculate that the value and meaning of Hmong carriers are based on their function--to care for children.

### *Community to Individual*

Thinking about the material culture analysis and in person interviews and focus group, I've come to the conclusion that the design, construction, and style of Hmong baby carriers are a result of the pre-immigration life experiences and environmental context of 1<sup>st</sup> generation Hmong immigrants. 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Hmong have not changed these physical characteristics of the baby carrier to reflect their life experiences or urban environment. If the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation do not make new connections to Hmong baby carriers, Hmong carriers will remain 'possessions' of 1<sup>st</sup> generation Hmong. Through the responses of the participants with children, they have become attached to Hmong baby carriers in ways that make sense to them. Hmong baby carriers were used on a daily

basis within the family and community as the socially and culturally accepted method of child care. In talking with 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Hmong women, I have found that using a Hmong baby carrier to care for children is an individual mother's choice. She may experience familial pressure to use a Hmong baby carrier because she received one from her mother. But there are many child care apparatuses to choose from and some function better for specific needs, such as riding in a car. I see this transformation of the use of Hmong baby carriers as moving from community supported to individual commitment. On one level, using a Hmong baby carrier is contrary to the larger society's norms and expectations of child care. On another level, it supports the larger society's norms and expectations for acting as an individual and making choices based on individual preferences.

#### Further Research

The route to object attachment with Hmong baby carriers can be further researched by interviewing older generation Hmong women. Comparing 1<sup>st</sup> generation Hmong women's feelings of attachment to baby carriers with those of the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation could expand the understanding of attachment during the process of adaptation.

As a follow up to this research, I would like to investigate Hmong baby carriers in other Hmong communities in the U.S. and abroad. There is a collection of baby carriers in California that has many carriers from Southeast Asia. This collection may contain a number of Hmong carriers for comparison to the carriers in St. Paul. There is a collection in Taiwan that contains a number of Chinese ethnic minority carriers from southwest

China. These collections may provide enough examples to conduct a comparison of Hmong baby carriers over multiple regions.

While I was an intern at the Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection at the University of Wisconsin, I found a five square motif on a number of Chinese Miao baby carriers that I also saw on a number of the Hmong carriers I examined in St. Paul. Since the St. Paul carriers are from Southeast Asia, the motif may be a link between the Hmong of Southeast Asia and Guizhou Province, China. Connections between the Hmong in these regions are part of ongoing research by linguists and anthropologists. And I know from attending local lectures and programs on Hmong origins, that this is a topic of general interest in the Hmong community in St. Paul.

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## APPENDIX A – SCHEDULES

### Focus group schedule

The types questions asked of focus groups are open ended yet focused on the topic.

Opening statement: Welcome and thank you for participating in my PhD research on Hmong baby carriers. I want to remind you to please be mindful of disclosing any personal or family information that you may later wish you hadn't.

Opening question:

First, let's go around the table and introduce ourselves:

Tell us who you are, what you are studying and what you most enjoy doing when you're not doing school work?

Introductory question:

So, what is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the words (Hmong) baby carrier?

Transition Question:

Think back to your first memory of a Hmong baby carrier, what do you remember?

Prompt: Can you say more about that?

Key questions:

How do you feel about Hmong baby carriers?

When do you or your family members use a Hmong baby carrier?

When wouldn't you use a Hmong baby carrier?

If you were showing someone a Hmong baby carrier who didn't know anything about Hmong culture, what would you tell them about it?

Ending question:

-I summarized the discussion, then asked

Did I correctly describe what was said?

- I restated the overview of the purpose of the study, then asked

Is there anything that we should have talked about but didn't?

Anything else any of you thought of that I should know?

Prompt for getting back on topic:

We are just having too much fun....

I've not heard that before and let's get back to...

## Interview schedule

### Opening question:

Tell us who you are, what you are studying and what do like to do when you're not doing school work?

### Introductory question:

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the words daim nyais (Hmong baby carrier)? Hla nyais

### Transition Question:

Is there a story or something you heard about daim nyais that you would share?

Are there any memories about Hmong baby carriers that you would share?

### Key questions:

What you feel/think about the color?

How about the pattern/design?

How about in comparison to Hmong traditional clothing?

Could you give me an example of when you or your family members use daim nyias (a Hmong baby carrier)?

Give me an example of when wouldn't you use a Hmong baby carrier?

How are they useful compared to other mainstream baby carrying products/methods?

Are they useful enough for you/do you use one with your own child/children?

If someone asked you about a Hmong baby carrier who didn't know anything about Hmong culture, what would you tell them?

### Ending question:

-I summarized the discussion, then asked

Did I correctly describe what was said?

-I restated the overview of the purpose of the study, then asked

Is there anything that we should have talked about but didn't?

APPENDIX B – BABY CARRIER DATA FORMS AND IMAGES

Accession #/Identifier: A85:12:1 Location: Science Museum  
Examination Date: 8/12/09

**Baby Carrier Examination Data Sheet**

Structure: (draw and document dimensions)  
H 75 x 54 cm  
Central panel: H 20 3/4 (20 1/2), W 20 5/8  
Top panel: H 8 1/2 x W 14 7/8  
outer border: 3 5/8, 3 3/8, 3 5/16

Documentation: Thailand  
Collected from Stephanie Sorenson who has worked with Southeast Asian refugee groups, and primarily Hmong for the past seven years (date of manufacture no later than 1985)

Fabric Type(s): 1- border 2- central panel  
1-Structure: plain weave 2- plain weave  
1-Yarn: staple/ single 2- staple  
1-Fiber: cotton 2- cotton  
1- Color: red 2- blue and white  
Application method: piece dyed Application method: batik

Fabric Type(s): 3- applique and border stripe 4- border trim  
3-Structure: twill weave 4- plain weave  
3-Yarn: filament 4- staple  
3-Fiber: synthetic 4- cotton  
3- Color: pink and green 4- white  
Application method: solution dyed Application method: piece dyed

Fabric Type(s): 5- border stripe 6- top panel base  
5-Structure: twill weave 6- plain weave  
5-Yarn: filament 6- filament  
5-Fiber: synthetic 6- synthetic  
5- Color: black 6- white

Accession #/Identifier: A85:12:1

Location: Science Museum

Examination Date: 8/12/09

Lrg yarn and weave struc gives

'braided' look in narrow trim stripe

Application method: solution dyed Application method: solution dyed

Fabric Type(s): 7- backing fabric

7-Structure: plain weave

7-Yarn: staple/fil?

7-Fiber: cotton

7- Color: dark blue

Application method: piece dyed

Embellishment: (mark location on diagram)

- Cross stitch
- Appliqué
- Reverse Appliqué
- Chain stitch
- Stain stitch
- Other embroidery stitching

Color:

Border: gr, pk, wht, blk, wht, pk, gr, pk, wht, blk, wht, pk, gr, pk, wht

Same color pattern on top and central panel

Wht and blk thread used on wht and blk trim

Red thread used on pk and gr trim

Also on triangle appliqué

Wht thread on one stripe of pink trim, central and top panel

Remarks:

Stitching is small and consistently spaced on border and applique

No evidence of a strap having been attached to the piece

Puckering of central panel in border trim

Shows on back (reverse side) of central panel

Backing is all one piece of fabric

Fold pattern visible, abrasion on fold edges

Photographs:

Figure B1: Baby carrier A:85:12:1



Accession #/Identifier: \_A87.8.1\_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_Science Museum\_\_\_\_\_ Examination Date: \_\_8/19/09\_\_\_\_\_

**Baby Carrier Examination Data Sheet**

Structure: (draw and document dimensions)  
H 64.5 cm x W 40 cm (25 3/8 x 15 3/4")  
Central panel: 17 1/2 L (17 1/4 R) x 15 1/8 B  
Top panel: 7 3/4 L (8 1/2 R) x 12 3/8" w  
Outer border: 2 L, 2 R, 2 1/16 B  
Straps: none

Documentation: Blue Hmong. (1950-1960)  
Purchased by Jan Folsom in a village in Chiang Mai province, Thailand from unnamed Hmong women.

Fabric Type(s): 1- \_border and applique\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_central panel\_\_\_\_\_

1-Structure \_plain weave, unbalanced \_\_\_ 2- \_plain weave \_\_\_\_\_

1-Yarn: staple/single, 2- \_staple/ single? \_\_\_\_\_  
weft larger, warp smaller

1-Fiber: \_cotton\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_cotton\_\_\_\_\_

1- Color: \_red, yellow, white\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_blue and white\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_piece dyed\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_batik (indigo?)\_\_\_\_\_

Fabric Type(s): 3- \_border\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_backing fabric\_\_\_\_\_

3-Structure: \_twill weave\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_plain weave \_\_\_\_\_

3-Yarn: \_staple\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_staple/single\_\_\_\_\_

3-Fiber: \_cotton?\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_cotton\_\_\_\_\_

3- Color: \_black\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_bright blue\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_piece dyed\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: surface dyed, white visible at areas of wear\_

Fabric Type(s): 5- \_top panel ground fabric\_\_\_\_\_

5-Structure: \_plain weave\_\_\_\_\_

5-Yarn: \_staple/ single\_\_\_\_\_

5-Fiber: \_cotton/ hemp? Flax?\_\_\_\_\_

Accession #/Identifier: \_A87.8.1\_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_Science Museum\_\_\_\_\_  
Examination Date: \_\_8/19/09\_\_\_\_\_

5- Color: \_natural/white\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_none?\_\_\_\_\_

Embellishment: (mark location on diagram)

- Cross stitch
- X Appliqué (red on central panel)
- Reverse Appliqué
- Chain stitch
- Stain stitch
- X Other embroidery stitching (top panel: maybe woven ask Peg??)

Color:

Border stripes: Yellow, red, white, black, white, red, yellow, red, white, black, white,  
red, yellow, red, white

Same pattern on central and top panels

Border stitches are small, hard to tell what color the thread is (mostly white)

Black fabric is sewn with red thread and some white thread

Appliqué is sewn with red thread

Embroidery is red, pink and purple silk? floss

Remarks:

Stain on lower boarder

Strap is cut off: red fabric, same as boarder fabric

Minimum 8 layers

Some soiled areas

Photographs:



Figure B2: Baby carrier A87.8.1



Accession #/Identifier: A90:1:29 Location: Science Museum  
Examination Date: 8/23/09

**Baby Carrier Examination Data Sheet**

Structure: (draw and document dimensions)  
H 58.4 cm x W 41.1 cm (22.99 x 16.18 in)  
Central panel: H 18 3/8 (18 1/2) X W 15 1/2  
Top panel: H 6 3/8 x W 9 5/8  
Outer border: 3, 2 5/8, 2 1/2

Documentation: Blue Hmong, Northern Thailand, 20<sup>th</sup> C  
Collected by Melissa R. Stoddart

Fabric Type(s): 1-border and applique 2-central panel\_base

1-Structure: satin? 2-plain weave; unbalanced

1-Yarn: filament warp, filament bundled weft 2-staple

1-Fiber: synthetic 2-cotton

1- Color: pink 2-blue and black

Application method: solution dyed Application method: piece dyed and printed

Fabric Type(s): 3-top panel\_base 4-border stripes & top panel appl\_(w&y)

3-Structure: huck 4-plain weave

3-Yarn: staple- single 4-staple- single

3-Fiber: cotton 4-cotton

3- Color: pink-faded from red 4-white, black and yellow

Application method: piece dyed Application method: piece dyed

Fabric Type(s): 5-backing

5-Structure: basket weave

5-Yarn: staple- ply

5-Fiber: cotton

5- Color: \_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_\_\_\_\_

Accession #/Identifier: A90:1:29

Location: Science Museum

Examination Date: 8/23/09

Embellishment: (mark location on diagram)

- Cross stitch
- Appliqué (pink, white, and yellow)
- Reverse Appliqué
- Chain stitch
- Stain stitch
- Other embroidery stitching

Color:

Border pattern: gr, yl, pk, wht, blk, wht, pk, gr, yl, pk, wht, blk, wht, pk, gr, yl, pk, wht

Same border pattern on central and top panels

Sewing thread matches fabric color except for 2<sup>nd</sup> pink from outside, only border with white thread

Remarks:

Soiled and faded (but less than the other two carriers)

Same pattern of wear and fade as other two carriers

Top panel feels thick like it is padded

Fading pattern indicates that a strap was removed

Additional section of fabric added on to from backing

Machine sewn with red thread

Photographs:

Figure B3: Baby carrier A90:1:29



Accession #/Identifier: \_A:90:1:30\_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_Science Museum\_\_\_\_\_  
Examination Date: 8/23/09\_\_\_\_\_

**Baby Carrier Examination Data Sheet**

Structure: (draw and document dimensions)  
H 64 cm x W 45 cm (25.19 x 17.71 in)  
Central panel: H 19 ½ (20) in x w 18 ¼ in  
Top panel: H 7 ¾ in x W 13 ½ in  
Outer border: 2 7/8, 2 7/8, 2 17/16

Documentation: Blue Hmong, Northern Thailand, 20<sup>th</sup> century  
Collected by Melissa R. Stoddart

Fabric Type(s): 1- \_pink border\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_central panel\_\_\_\_\_

1-Structure \_\_\_satin?\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_plain weave\_\_\_\_\_

1-Yarn: \_\_\_filament, filament bundled\_\_\_\_ 2- \_staple\_\_\_\_\_

1-Fiber: \_\_\_synthetic\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_cotton\_\_\_\_\_

1- Color: \_\_\_pink\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_blue and white\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_solution dyed\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_piece dyed and printed

Fabric Type(s): 3- \_\_top panel base\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_border trim\_\_\_\_\_

3-Structure: \_huck\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_plain weave\_\_\_\_\_

3-Yarn: \_staple single\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_staple-single\_\_\_\_\_

3-Fiber: \_cotton?\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_cotton\_\_\_\_\_

3- Color: \_red\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_\_white and black\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_piece\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_piece?\_\_\_\_\_

Fabric Type(s): 5- \_\_backing\_\_\_\_\_

5-Structure: \_plain weave\_\_\_\_\_

5-Yarn: \_staple -single\_\_\_\_\_

5-Fiber: \_cotton\_\_\_\_\_

5- Color: \_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_piece\_\_\_\_\_

Accession #/Identifier: \_A:90:1:30\_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_Science Museum\_\_\_\_\_

Examination Date: 8/23/09\_\_\_\_\_

Embellishment: (mark location on diagram)

- Cross stitch
- Appliqué
- Reverse Appliqué
- Chain stitch
- Stain stitch
- Other embroidery stitching

Color:

Pink on main panel

Yellow, pink and white on top panel

Appliqué and border sewn in same color thread as fabric

Very fine stitching

Border colors are narrow

Pompoms- red multi-ply yarn, fiber?

PP sewn from top and before backing sewn on

Remarks:

Much of appliqué is worn- especially synthetic fabric- less dense fabric>worn and longer floats

Soiled- faded and pattern like other piece> brighter pink where strap covered central panel

In middle, more faded near bottom

Top panel had padding layer: light green- plain weave/rep, staple-single, cotton, piece dyed

Photographs:

Figure B4: Baby carrier A90:1:30



Accession #/Identifier: \_A90:1:31\_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_MN Sci Mus\_\_\_\_\_ Examination Date: \_8 23/09\_\_\_\_\_

**Baby Carrier Examination Data Sheet**

Structure: (draw and document dimensions)  
H 56.5 cm x W 39 cm  
Central panel: H 17 7/8 (17 5/8) in x W 15 1/4 in  
Top panel: H 5 (4 3/4) x W 11 1/4 in  
Outer border: 2 5/8, 2 3/4, 2 3/4

Documentation: Blue Hmong, Northern Thailand, 20<sup>th</sup> century  
Collected by Melissa R. Stoddart

Fabric Type(s): 1- \_border and applique\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_top panel base\_\_\_\_\_

1-Structure \_satin?\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_huck\_\_\_\_\_

1-Yarn: filament warp and fil bundle weft 2- \_staple- single\_\_\_\_\_

1-Fiber: \_synthetic\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_cotton\_\_\_\_\_

1- Color: \_pink and green\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_red\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_solution dyed\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_piece dyed\_\_\_\_\_

Fabric Type(s): 3-\_\_\_\_\_ 4-\_\_\_\_\_

3-Structure:\_\_\_\_\_ 4-\_\_\_\_\_

3-Yarn: \_\_\_\_\_ 4-\_\_\_\_\_

3-Fiber:\_\_\_\_\_ 4-\_\_\_\_\_

3- Color:\_\_\_\_\_ 4-\_\_\_\_\_

Application method:\_\_\_\_\_ Application method:\_\_\_\_\_

Embellishment: (mark location on diagram)

- Cross stitch
- Appliqué
- Reverse Appliqué
- Chain stitch
- Stain stitch
- Other embroidery stitching

Color:



Accession #/Identifier: \_A90:1:31\_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_MN Sci Mus\_\_\_\_\_

Examination Date: \_8 23/09\_\_\_\_\_

Remarks:

Photographs:

Figure B5: Baby carrier A90:1:31



Accession #/Identifier: A90:1:32 Location: Science Museum of MN  
Examination Date: August 20, 2009

### Baby Carrier Examination Data Sheet

Structure: (draw and document dimensions)

H 51 cm (20.08 in)

W 43 cm (16.93 in)

Central panel: H 16 in x W 15 7/9 in

Top panel: H 3 7/8 (4 1/16) in x W 10 3/8

Outer border: 2 3/4, 3 5/8, 2 3/4

Documentation: Blue Hmong, northern Thailand, 20<sup>th</sup> century

Collected by Melissa R. Stoddart

Fabric Type(s): 1- red border 2- central panel

1-Structure: plain weave, slightly unbalanced 2- plain weave

1-Yarn: staple/single 2- staple/ single

1-Fiber: Cotton 2- cotton

1- Color: red 2- blue and white

Application method: piece dyed Application method: batik – print?

Fabric Type(s): 3- top panel base 4/5/6- trim/narrow border stripes

3-Structure: plain weave unbalanced/  
rib pattern used to place appliqué squares 4/5/6- plain weave /plain/plain

3-Yarn: staple/single 4/5/6 staple / filament / staple: single

3-Fiber: cotton 4/5/6 cotton?/ synthetic/ cotton

3- Color: pink 4/5/6 Black/ white/white

Application method: Piece dyed Application method: piece dyed/ dope/piece

Fabric Type(s): 7- white applique (central and top panel) 8- trim/narrow border stripes

7-Structure: plain weave 8- complex weave: plain and twill weave

7-Yarn: staple/single 8- ?

7-Fiber: cotton 8- synthetic?

Accession #/Identifier: A90:1:32 Location: Science Museum of MN  
Examination Date: August 20, 2009

7- Color: white 8- red

Application method: Piece dyed Application method: dope dyed?

9- 2<sup>nd</sup> red trim and applique

9- Structure: plain weave

9- Yarn: staple/single

9- Fiber: cotton

9- Color: red

Application method: Piece dyed

Embellishment: (mark location on diagram)

- Cross stitch
- Appliqué
- Reverse Appliqué
- Chain stitch
- Stain stitch
- Other embroidery stitching

Button hole stitch on top panel in green and orange filament floss

Color: pompoms: small in green and yellow, two large in purple

All multi ply synthetic yarn (bright and not faded like natural fiber fabric)

Thread used to attach pps sewn through backing fabric

On top panel: small appliqué squares are non-woven fabric (maybe silk)

Remarks: reinforcing fabric added at point of stress

Evidence of attached strap-fading and needle holes

Worn and soiled

Backing fabric is one piece

White trim/border stripes show soiling in different manner/ different fabrics

See attached accession record

Photographs:

Figure B6: Baby carrier A90:1:32



Accession #/Identifier: A90:1:33 Location: Science Museum  
Examination Date: 8/21/09

**Baby Carrier Examination Data Sheet**

Structure: (draw and document dimensions)  
H 64.5 cm x W 42 cm (25.39 x 16.53 in)  
Central panel: H 17 in x W 16 in  
Top panel: H 8 in x W 10 5/8 in  
Outer border: 2 in, 2 in, 2 1/16 in  
Central inner panel: H 12 3/8 in x W top 5 1/2 in bottom 7 7/8 in

Documentation: Blue Hmong, Northern Thailand, 20<sup>th</sup> century  
Collected by Melissa R. Stoddart

Fabric Type(s): 1- border and applique 2- central panel  
1-Structure: plain weave 2- plain weave  
1-Yarn: staple/single 2- staple/ single  
1-Fiber: cotton 2- cotton  
1- Color: red 2- blue and white  
Application method: piece dyed Application method: batik

Fabric Type(s): 3- border trim stripe 4- border trim stripe  
3-Structure: plain weave 4- plain weave  
3-Yarn: staple 4- staple/ single  
3-Fiber: cotton 4- cotton  
3- Color: orange, green, purple, pink, white 4- white  
Application method: print Application method: piece dyed

Fabric Type(s): 5- border trim stripe 6- border trim stripe  
5-Structure: \_\_\_\_\_ 6- twill weave  
5-Yarn: staple 6- staple/ single  
5-Fiber: cotton 6- cotton  
5- Color: green 6- black

Accession #/Identifier: A90:1:33 Location: Science Museum  
Examination Date: 8/21/09

Application method: piece dyed Application method: piece dyed

Fabric Type(s): 7- top panel 8- yarn embroidery

7-Structure: huck 8- \_\_\_\_\_

7-Yarn: staple/single 8- staple/ply

7-Fiber: cotton 8- synthetic

7- Color: white 8- pink

Application method: piece dyed Application method: solution dyed

Embellishment: (mark location on diagram)

- Cross stitch
- Appliqué
- Reverse Appliqué
- Chain stitch
- Stain stitch
- Other embroidery stitching

Color:

Border stripe pattern: central panel: gr, red, wht, blk, wht, rd, print, rd, wht, blk, wht, red,  
gr, red, wht

Top panel: gr, rd, wht, blk, wht, red gr, rd, wht, blk, rd, gr print, wht

With 3" print fabric in second red stripe

Appliqué: in red and patterned fabric

Remarks:

Machine sewn

Remnant of strap: plain weave, staple/single, cotton, print: pink and white

Reinforcing fabric at transition between top and central panels

Plain weave, rib (dense), staple/?, cotton, print on dk red: gold, white, gr, blk

Post trim attachment- not sewn through by trim stitching

Wear and soiling, repairs made and reinforcements attached

Photographs:

Figure B7: Baby carrier A90:1:33





Accession #/Identifier: CHS1 \_\_\_\_\_ Location: Center for Hmong Studies, Concordia St. Paul  
Examination Date: 3/24/09

**Baby Carrier Examination Data Sheet**

Structure: (draw and document dimensions)  
Central panel: H 17 6/8 L (17 7/8 R) x W 14 5/8 in  
Top panel: H 6 1/4 L (5 7/8 R) x W 10 in  
Outer border: 2 7/8 L, 3 1/8 R, 2 7/8 B  
Straps: L) 58 1/2" long  
Three pieces of fabric, 1<sup>st</sup> join 20", 2<sup>nd</sup> join 45 1/2 "  
R) 9" worn off

Documentation: None

Fabric Type(s): 1- \_border and applique \_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_central and top panel base fabric \_\_  
1-Structure \_woven/satin? \_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_huck (aida cloth) \_\_\_\_\_  
1-Yarn: \_filament \_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_staple \_\_\_\_\_  
1-Fiber: \_silk/synthetic \_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_cotton/hemp/synthetic? \_\_\_\_\_  
1- Color: \_bright pink>faded pink \_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_cream/tan \_\_\_\_\_  
Application method: \_piece/solution \_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_ piece \_\_\_\_\_

Fabric Type(s): 3- \_strap \_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_\_\_\_\_  
3-Structure: \_plain \_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_\_\_\_\_  
3-Yarn: \_? \_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_\_\_\_\_  
3-Fiber: \_silk/synthetic \_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_\_\_\_\_  
3- Color: \_grn, blue, red, turquoise on tan \_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_\_\_\_\_  
Application method: \_print \_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_\_\_\_\_

Embellishment: (mark location on diagram)

- X Cross stitch
- X Appliqué
- o Reverse Appliqué
- o Chain stitch
- o Stain stitch
- X Other embroidery stitching

Color:  
Cross stitch: central panel- blue/green and pink

Accession #/Identifier: CHS1 \_\_\_\_\_ Location: Center for Hmong Studies, Concordia St. Paul  
Examination Date: 3/24/09

Border: lt grn, lt pink, blank, blue, yel, blue/green, pink, blank,  
blk, pink, bright (hot) pink, blue (inside>>outside of pattern)  
Top panel: pink, yellow, blue/green, purple, and blue squares with  
'flower' pattern in center>variety of colors  
Border: blank, blue/green, pink, yellow, pink, blank, purple, bright (hot)  
pink, green, yellow

Appliqué: central panel- pink criss cross pattern, 2 straight borders, and one  
zigzag border

Other embroidery: couched yellow thread on outside/large pink border

Pompoms: sewn over cross stitch, 3 lt pink, 3 dk pink, 3 green, 1 cream/very lt pink  
Two cream/very lt cream on corner squares of central panel

Remarks:

All hand stitched  
Very damaged and soiled from use  
Burn hole in border  
Seams coming apart: can see the inside> additional layers of fabric  
Flower print (see pic)  
Backing fabric very worn and thread bare  
Pompoms missing:

One row of stitched visible on central panel in dark colored thread  
Strap coarsely sewn onto carrier: orange thread in large and inconsistent stitches

Photographs:

Figure B8: Baby carrier CHS1



Accession #/Identifier: \_CHS2\_\_\_\_\_ Location: Center for Hmong Studies,, Concordia St. Paul  
Examination Date: 3/24/09\_\_

**Baby Carrier Examination Data Sheet**

Structure: (draw and document dimensions)  
Central Panel: H 15 L (15 ½ R) x W 12 ¾  
Top panel: H 4 ½ L (3 ¾ R) x W 9"  
Outer border: 2 ½ L, 2 ½ L, 2 3/5 B  
Straps: L) 59 ½ long- two joins, 8 1/2 and 45"  
R) 49" long – two joins, 7 and 34 1/2"

Documentation: none (lee pao xiong said it is White Hmong)

Fabric Type(s): 1-\_border\_\_\_\_\_ 2-\_central and top panel base fabric

1-Structure \_plain\_weave\_\_\_\_\_ 2-\_huck\_\_\_\_\_

1-Yarn: \_staple\_\_\_\_\_ 2-\_staple\_\_\_\_\_

1-Fiber: \_cotton\_\_\_\_\_ 2-\_cotton\_\_\_\_\_

1- Color: \_red-faded\_\_\_\_\_ 2-\_tan/cream\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_piece\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_piece\_\_\_\_\_

Fabric Type(s): 3-\_central panel corner notches\_(appl)\_\_\_\_\_ 4-\_backing\_\_\_\_\_

3-Structure: \_plain unbalanced lg filing yarns 4-\_plain unbalanced- dense filling faced\_

3-Yarn: filling \_\_warp-filament\_\_\_\_\_ 4-\_staple\_\_\_\_\_

3-Fiber: \_synthetic> iridescent filaments\_\_\_\_\_ 4-\_cotton\_\_\_\_\_

3- Color: \_cream\_\_\_\_\_ 4-\_black (faded)\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_solution\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_piece dyed\_\_\_\_\_

Embellishment: (mark location on diagram)

- X Cross stitch
- o Appliqué
- o Reverse Appliqué
- o Chain stitch
- o Stain stitch
- o Other embroidery stitching

Color:

Cross stitch: central panel- black/purple/ orange, pink, green with blank parts (cream)

Accession #/Identifier: \_CHS2\_\_\_\_\_ Location: Center for Hmong Studies,, Concordia St. Paul  
Examination Date: 3/24/09\_\_

Green all over diamond pattern, lg diamonds have pink inside border, most diamonds have orange and black/purple > pattern  
Some of the smaller diamonds have a different stitching pattern or color combo  
Top panel: blue, pink, green, yellow with blank parts (cream)  
Same colors as central panel  
Different pattern: rams horns around central diamond  
Repeated in two rows  
Border pattern: central panel- blue, red, blue, red  
Top panel- same

Remarks:

Damage from wear, small amount of staining  
Faded  
All hand sewn  
White fabric is stiff  
Straps pieced together of different fabrics  
One is blue with pink and yellow flowers  
One is blue (warp) knit  
Most of blue plain unbalanced weave

Photographs:

Figure B9: Baby carrier CHS2



Accession #/Identifier: \_\_H5.2002.125.270\_\_\_\_\_ Location: Hmong Archive\_\_\_\_\_  
Examination Date: 6/14/09\_\_\_\_\_

**Baby Carrier Examination Data Sheet**

Structure: (draw and document dimensions)  
H 65 x W 45 cm (25.59 x 17.71 in)  
Central panel: H 20 1/8 L (20 1/4 R) x W 17 3/8 in  
Top panel: H 5 5/16 R (5 5/8 L) x W 11 3/4 in  
Outer border: ?  
Straps: R + L- 3" at attachment to top of carrier  
59" long  
21" wide at end

Documentation:  
19??

Fabric Type(s): 1-border, corner square & sm diamond(tp) 2-\_central panel base\_\_\_\_\_

1-Structure \_satin\_\_\_\_\_ 2-\_plain unbalanced\_\_\_\_\_

1-Yarn: \_filament\_\_\_\_\_ 2-\_staple\_\_\_\_\_

1-Fiber: \_synthetic\_\_\_\_\_ 2-\_cotton/syn blend?\_\_\_\_\_

1- Color: \_\_pink\_w/iridescent fil\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_blue with black print\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_yarn/solution\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_piece/print\_\_\_\_\_

Fabric Type(s): 3-\_border and applique\_\_\_\_\_ 4-\_top panel base\_\_\_\_\_

3-Structure: \_plain unbalanced\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_huck\_\_\_\_\_

3-Yarn: \_filament?\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_staple\_\_\_\_\_

3-Fiber: \_synthetic?\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_cotton\_\_\_\_\_

3- Color: \_pink, dk grn, wht, blk, saturated yl\_ 4- \_\_red\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_piece/solution?\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_piece\_\_\_\_\_

Fabric Type(s): 5-\_applique and border\_\_\_\_\_ 6-\_applique\_\_\_\_\_

5-Structure: \_plain\_\_\_\_\_ 6- \_satin\_\_\_\_\_

5-Yarn: \_?\_\_\_\_\_ 6- \_filament\_\_\_\_\_

5-Fiber: \_?\_\_\_\_\_ 6- \_synthetic\_\_\_\_\_

5- Color: \_light yellow\_\_\_\_\_ 6- \_bright green\_w/iridescent filament\_\_\_\_\_

Accession #/Identifier: \_\_H5.2002.125.270\_\_\_\_\_ Location: Hmong Archive\_\_\_\_\_ Examination Date: 6/14/09\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_\_?\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_yarn/solution\_\_\_\_\_

Fabric Type(s): 7-\_straps\_\_\_\_\_ 8-\_\_\_\_\_

7-Structure: \_\_plain\_\_\_\_\_ 8-\_\_\_\_\_

7-Yarn: \_single staple\_\_\_\_\_ 8-\_\_\_\_\_

7-Fiber: \_\_cotton\_\_\_\_\_ 8-\_\_\_\_\_

7- Color: \_\_green (lime)\_\_\_\_\_ 8-\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: piced \_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_\_\_\_\_

Embellishment: (mark location on diagram)

- Cross stitch
- Appliqué
- Reverse Appliqué
- Chain stitch
- Stain stitch
- Other embroidery stitching

Color:

Appliqué: central panel- pink

Top panel- pink, white, yellow, green

Pink on top of white on red huck

Pompoms: red/orange (4), yellow (4), dark green (2)

Yarn

Border color pattern: bright yel, dk grn, lite yel, pink, white, white w/blk triangles, pink, lt yel, dk grn, lt yel, pink white, white w/blk triangle, pink, lt yel, dk grn, lt yel, pink, wht

Top panel: bright yel, dk grn, bt yel, pink, wht, wht w/ blk triangles, pink, bt yel, dk grn, lt yel, pink, wht, wht w/blk triangles, pink, lt yel, dk grn, lt yel, pink, wht

Thread colors match fabric color

Remarks:

Appliqué: hand sewn, fine stitches

Central panel appliqué: on 'leg' of appliqué sewn with thick brown thread

Similar to thread used to attach straps

Pompoms: sewn down from top, not round> flat 'disc' shape

Thread not visible on back of piece

Border stitched visible on back of carrier

Straps attached with blue and brown thread

Coarse thread and stitching compared to rest of carrier

Photographs:



Figure B10: Baby carrier H5.2002.125.270



Accession #/Identifier: \_H5.2002.125.271\_\_\_\_\_ Location: Hmong Archives\_\_\_\_\_  
Examination Date: 53/27/09\_\_\_\_\_

### Baby Carrier Examination Data Sheet

Structure: (draw and document dimensions)  
H 58 x 40 cm (23 x 15.75 in)  
Central panel: H 18 3/8 L (18 1/8 R) x W 16 1/16  
Top panel: H 4 1/2 L (4 1/4 R) x w 10 3/8  
Outer border: 2 7/8 L, 2 3/4 R, 2 7/8 B  
No staps

Documentation:  
Plua Ly, nov 92

Fabric Type(s): 1- \_border and appliqué\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_central panel base\_\_\_\_\_

1-Structure \_plain unbalanced\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_plain weave\_\_\_\_\_

1-Yarn: \_spun/staple\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_spun/staple\_\_\_\_\_

1-Fiber: \_poly/cotton?\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_hemp/cotton\_more likely-pretty fine

1- Color: \_red\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_blue indigo\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: solution or piece dyed Application method: \_batik\_\_\_\_\_

Fabric Type(s): 3- backing 4- appliqué top panel

3-Structure: \_plain unbalanced\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_ plain unbalanced: higher thread count  
than in #1

3-Yarn: \_spun/staple\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_ spun: larger yarn than #1 \_

3-Fiber: \_cotton/poly\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_cotton \_\_\_\_\_

3- Color: \_black\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_orange/red\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_piece or solution\_\_\_ Application method: \_piece dyed \_\_\_\_\_

Embellishment: (mark location on diagram)

- Cross stitch
- Appliqué
- Reverse Appliqué
- Chain stitch
- Stain stitch
- Other embroidery stitching

Color:  
Appliqué: central panel red

Accession #/Identifier: \_H5.2002.125.271\_\_\_\_\_ Location: Hmong Archives\_\_\_\_\_  
Examination Date: 53/27/09\_\_\_\_\_

Top panel- yellow, white, and red  
Two squares of white fabric have small amount of satin stitch embroidery: blue  
and pink color

Border color pattern: central panel- yl, red, wht, blk, wht, red, yel, gr, yel, red, wht, blk, wht,  
red, yel, gr, yel, red wht

Top panel- same as central panel

Red triangles appliqué on top of yellow squares, arranged around red and white appliqué  
pattern

Remarks:

Pompoms: spun yarn, 2 ply, orange/red,  
Under the pompoms are red, same as fabric 1  
Red appliqué on top of white appliqué

On the back:

Border stitching is visible  
Appliqué stitching visible  
Pompoms attached through backing, stitching visible  
Backing fabric is pieced,  
narrow band at top of top panel and  
long triangle piece on left upper part of central panel

stitching is filament thread (silk or synthetic)

Photographs:

Figure B11: Baby carrier H5.2002.125.271



Accession #/Identifier: H5 2002.125.272 Location: Hmong Archives  
Examination Date: 3/27/09

**Baby Carrier Examination Data Sheet**

Structure: (draw and document dimensions)  
H67 x W45 cm (26.37 x 17.71)  
Central panel: H 21 ¼ L (20 7/8 R) x W 16 5/8  
Top panel: H 4 5/8 L (4 7/8 R) x W 9 ½  
H 12 x W 25 cm  
Outer Border: 2 3/8 L, 2 3/8 R, 2 3/8 B  
No straps

Documentation:  
Ka Yeng Lee, April 1, 1993

Fabric Type(s): 1- border and applique 2- central panel base

1-Structure plain unbalanced 2- huck weave (aida cloth)

1-Yarn: warp- filament fine\_ weft- fil lgr\_ 2- spun

1-Fiber: synthetic 2- cotton

1- Color: hot iridescent pink 2- cream/tan

Application method: solution dyed Application method: piece dyed

Fabric Type(s): 3- backing 4- \_\_\_\_\_

3-Structure: plain: not very dense weave 4- \_\_\_\_\_

3-Yarn: spun/staple with slubs 4- \_\_\_\_\_

3-Fiber: cotton/poly? 4- \_\_\_\_\_

3- Color: black 4- \_\_\_\_\_

Application method: piece/solution dyed Application method: \_\_\_\_\_

Embellishment: (mark location on diagram)

- X Cross stitch
- X Appliqué
- o Reverse Appliqué
- o Chain stitch
- o Stain stitch
- o Other embroidery stitching

Color:

Accession #/Identifier: \_H5 2002.125.272\_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_Hmong Archives\_\_\_\_\_ Examination Date: \_3/27/09\_\_\_\_\_

Central and top panels covered in cross stitch

Forming border stripes and interior pattern

Central pattern: black and dark blue yarn

blk in small spaces and outer cross stitch area

half stitch used to create box pattern

23 x 21 rt square

21 x 22 lf square

Pattern not centered in space

appliqué covers some of the stitching pattern (picture)

border color order: blank, pink, yel, grn, yel, blank, black, blank, pink, yel, grn,

yel, pink, blank, black, blank, pink, yel, grn, yel

central and top panel the same?

pompoms:

sewn through backing- stitching can be seen of back

eight pink and two purple

Remarks:

On back: one visible row of stitching around edge of main panel

Fine construction and appliqué stitching

interlocking square (5) pattern in appliqué

repeat of two

Photographs:

Figure B12: Baby carrier H5.2002.125.272



Accession #/Identifier: \_H5.2002.125.273\_\_\_\_\_ Location: Hmong Archives\_\_\_\_\_  
Examination Date: 6/12/09\_\_\_\_\_

**Baby Carrier Examination Data Sheet**

Structure: (draw and document dimensions)  
H 63 x W 42 cm (24.80 x 16.53 in)  
Central panel: H 19 ¼ L (17 7/8 R) x W 15 ¾ in  
Top panel: H 6 1/6 L (7 1/8 R) x W 11 7/8 in  
Outer border: 2 ¾ L, 2 ¾ R, 2 5/8 B  
Straps: R) 2 3/8 w x 49 ¼ Long  
L) 1 7/8 w x 48 7/8 Long

Documentation:  
Bought possibly to carry Sonia Gockley home from India  
UNKNOWN Camacrafts Chiang Khan 87apr7

Fabric Type(s): 1- \_border and applique\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_base fabric\_\_\_\_\_

1-Structure \_plain unbalanced (broadcloth) 2- \_plain unbalanced\_\_\_\_\_

1-Yarn: \_staple\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_staple\_\_\_\_\_

1-Fiber: \_cotton\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_cotton\_\_\_\_\_

1- Color: \_\_red\_(+grn, wht, blk, yel)\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_\_blue indigo\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_piece dyed\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_batik\_\_\_\_\_

Fabric Type(s): 3- \_backing\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_tie\_\_\_\_\_

3-Structure: \_plain balanced\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_plain unbalanced\_\_\_\_\_

3-Yarn: \_staple\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_staple\_\_\_\_\_

3-Fiber: \_\_synthetic?\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_cotton\_\_\_\_\_

3- Color: \_black and grey(houndstooth pattern)4- \_black\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_yarn dyed\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_piece\_\_\_\_\_

Fabric Type(s): 5- \_backing (small piece)\_\_\_\_\_

5-Structure: \_satin?\_\_\_\_\_

5-Yarn: \_staple\_\_\_\_\_

5-Fiber: \_\_cotton\_\_\_\_\_



Accession #/Identifier: \_H5.2002.125.273\_\_\_\_\_ Location: Hmong Archives\_\_\_\_\_  
Examination Date: 6/12/09\_\_\_\_\_

5- Color: \_black\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_piece dyed\_\_\_\_\_

Embellishment: (mark location on diagram)

- Cross stitch
- Appliqué
- Reverse Appliqué
- Chain stitch
- Stain stitch
- Other embroidery stitching

Color:

Appliqué: central panel red on the batik

Top panel: yellow squares with red, green or blue diamonds

Red on top of white on red base

Border: central and top panel- gr, red, wht, blk, wht, red, yel, red, wht, black, wht, red,  
grn, red wht

Two black stripes are wider than the rest

Thread color: central panel: red on rd and grn, wht on wht, yel, black on black

Some wht on red

Top panel: more white used on all but black fabric

Straps sewn with black thread, not as fine as other thread used

Pompoms: 10 orange/red yarn

Sewn down though top of pompom and backing fabric, sewing visible

Remarks:

Fine sewing/stitching

Appliqué on central panel sewn through backing fabric, can see red and white thread on back

Strap is folded over to form four layers where attached to top of baby carrier

The small piece of black backing fabric looks like it is a second layer on top of the hounds

tooth backing but this fabric doesn't reach the top of the carrier

The hounds tooth wasn't big enough to cover the entire back

Hounds tooth has a seam down the middle

Photographs:

Figure B13: Baby carrier H5.2002.125.273



Accession #/Identifier: \_H5.2004.277\_\_\_\_\_ Location: Hmong Archives\_\_\_\_\_  
Examination Date: \_6/12/09\_\_\_\_\_

**Baby Carrier Examination Data Sheet**

Structure: (draw and document dimensions)  
H 58 x W 37 cm. (22.83 x 15 in)  
Central panel: H 18 L (18 R) x W 14 ½ in  
Top panel: H 5 ¼ R (5 5/8 L) x W 10 ¼ in  
Outer border: 2 1/4 L, 2 ¼ R, 2 ¼ B  
No straps

Documentation:  
By Chia Chu Hang (Mrs.?), Hong Het (near Laos Vietnam border)

Fabric Type(s): 1- \_border and applique\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_base central and top panel\_\_\_\_\_  
1-Structure \_satin?\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_huck (aida)\_\_\_\_\_  
1-Yarn: \_filament\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_cotton?\_\_\_\_\_  
1-Fiber: \_synthetic\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_\_\_\_\_  
1- Color: \_pink and (white/fluorescent?)\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_natural/cream\_\_\_\_\_  
Application method: \_yarn dyed\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_piece\_\_\_\_\_

Fabric Type(s): 3- \_backing\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_\_\_\_\_  
3-Structure: \_plain unbalanced\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_\_\_\_\_  
3-Yarn: \_filament warp fine weft larger\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_\_\_\_\_  
3-Fiber: \_synthetic\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_\_\_\_\_  
3- Color: \_blue, pink, yellow, green flower\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_\_\_\_\_  
Application method: \_print\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_\_\_\_\_

Embellishment: (mark location on diagram)

- X Cross stitch
- X Appliqué
- o Reverse Appliqué
- o Chain stitch
- X Stain stitch
- o Other embroidery stitching

Color:

Accession #/Identifier: \_H5.2004.277\_\_\_\_\_

Location: Hmong Archives\_\_\_\_\_

Examination Date: \_6/12/09\_\_\_\_\_

Appliqué: hand sewn

Cross stitch: yellow, pink, green, red, and black

Border color pattern:

**Central:** yl, pink, gm, pink, yl, blk triangles, yl, pink, red, pink, yl, green triangle, yl, pink, red, pink, yel, blank, black every other, black alternate every other, plain, yel, pink, red pink, yel, appl pink, yel, pink, red, pink, yel, pink app, yel, red pink, red

**Top:** green triangle, blank, pink, yel, pink, blank, blank, pink, yel, pink, blank, black alternating, black alternating, blank

All stitching done in fuzzy yarn

Black is smooth, no fuzz/thread

Pompoms:

6- Yellow yarn same as cross stitch

Not evenly trimmed, 2 are cleanly trimmed round, 4 not trimmed even

Remarks:

Fine sewing but not consistent in size

Pink border hand sewn

Stitched through to the back

Can see row of straight stitches

On front hidden stitch

Looks like same pink filament as pink border fabric

Small rectangle appliqué pattern

Photographs:

Figure B14: Baby carrier H5.2004.277



Accession #/Identifier: \_H5. 2004.278\_\_\_\_\_ Location: Hmong Archives\_\_\_\_\_  
Examination Date: 6/12/09\_\_\_\_\_

### Baby Carrier Examination Data Sheet

Structure: (draw and document dimensions)  
H 48 x W 34 cm (H 18.89 x W 13.38 in)  
H 19 7/8 L (18 7/8 R) x W 13 1/2 B (13 3/4 T)  
Outer border: 1 7/8 L, 1 7/8 R, 2 1/4 B, 3/4 T  
Shape: one rectangle (unlike other bcs)

Documentation:  
By Chia Chu Hang (Mrs.?), Nong Het (town? Near Laos and Vietnam border) feb 35 2004

Fabric Type(s): 1- \_border and applique\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_central panel base\_\_\_\_\_

1-Structure \_ plain unbalanced\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_plain\_\_\_\_\_

1-Yarn: \_staple\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_staple\_\_\_\_\_

1-Fiber: \_cotton/ linen?\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_cotton/hemp?\_\_\_\_\_

1- Color: \_red\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_blue indigo\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_piece dyed\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_batik\_\_\_\_\_

Fabric Type(s): 3- \_backing and central panel corners\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_trim and applique\_\_\_\_\_

3-Structure: \_plain unbalanced\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_plain\_\_\_\_\_

3-Yarn: filament\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_staple\_\_\_\_\_

3-Fiber: \_synthetic\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_cotton/flax\_\_\_\_\_

3- Color: \_blue, pink, and red on white\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_yellow\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: printed\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_piece\_\_\_\_\_

Embellishment: (mark location on diagram)

- Cross stitch
- Appliqué
- Reverse Appliqué
- Chain stitch
- Stain stitch
- Other embroidery stitching

Color:  
Appliqué: hand sewn, finely done

Accession #/Identifier: \_H5. 2004.278\_\_\_\_\_

Location: Hmong Archives\_\_\_\_\_

Examination Date: 6/12/09\_\_\_\_\_

Red and gold on batik central panel  
Red on top panel

Remarks:

Red and yellow border machine sewn

Not high quality

Thread not clipped

Batik base maybe one piece of fabric

No overlap seen between central and top panel when piece held up to light

Fabrics are thin (border and back)

Photographs:

Figure B15: Baby carrier H5.2004.278





Accession #/Identifier: \_HCC1\_\_\_\_\_ Location: Hmong Cultural Center, St. Paul\_\_  
Examination Date: \_3/19/09\_\_

**Baby Carrier Examination Data Sheet**

Structure: (draw and document dimensions)  
H 21 1/4\* x W 16 3/8  
Central panel: H 17 7/8 L (17 3/4 R) x W 16 3/8  
Top panel: H 3 3/8 L (3 5/8 R) x W 9 7/8"  
Outer border: 3 L, 2 7/8 R, 2 7/8 B  
Straps: L) 48" long  
R) 48" long  
20 1/2 wide at end

Documentation: none

Fabric Type(s): 1- \_border and appliqué\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_plain weave\_\_\_\_\_

1-Structure \_plain weave- fine broadcloth\_ 2- \_central panel base cloth\_\_\_\_\_

1-Yarn: \_?\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_?\_\_\_\_\_

1-Fiber: \_cotton\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_cotton\_\_\_\_\_

1- Color: \_red\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_blue\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_piece dyed\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_piced dyed\_\_\_\_\_

Fabric Type(s): 3- \_strap\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_top panel base fabric\_\_\_\_\_

3-Structure: \_plain weave \_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_huck\_\_\_\_\_

3-Yarn: \_?\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_spun/staple\_\_\_\_\_

3-Fiber: \_cotton\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_cotton\_\_\_\_\_

3- Color: \_dark green\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_red\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_ piece dyed \_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_piece dyed\_\_\_\_\_

Embellishment: (mark location on diagram)

- Cross stitch
- Appliqué
- Reverse Appliqué
- Chain stitch
- Stain stitch
- Other embroidery stitching

Color:

Appliqué:

Accession #/Identifier: \_HCC1\_\_\_\_\_ Location: Hmong Cultural Center, St. Paul\_\_  
Examination Date: \_3/19/09\_\_

Central panel: red

Top panel: red on white appl on top of red base  
yellow squares w/ green and red diamonds

Pompoms: red/orange yarn (10)

Border strip color pattern:

Central panel: yel, grn, yel, red, wht, blk, wht, red, yel, grn, yel, red, wht

Top panel: same

Thread:

Central panel:

Top panel:

Remarks:

Piece is worn

Small damage at corners on both sides

R strap has come loose, stitching coming apart

Piece is lighter in weight thickness than HCC2

Photographs:

Figure B16: Baby carrier HCC1



Accession #/Identifier: HCC 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Location: Hmong Cultural Center, St. Paul\_ \_\_\_\_\_  
Examination Date: \_3/19/09\_

**Baby Carrier Examination Data Sheet**

Structure: (draw and document dimensions)  
Central panel: H 16 1/8 L (16 3/4 R) X W 14 3/8"  
Top panel: H 6 1/2 L (6 3/6 L) X W 11"  
Outer border: 2 L, 1 7/8 R, 1 7/8 B  
Straps: 51 1/2 long  
8 3/8" wide at end

Documentation: none

Fabric Type(s): 1- \_central panel border \_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_central panel base fabric \_\_\_\_\_  
1-Structure plain weave \_\_\_\_\_ 2-plain weave \_\_\_\_\_  
1-Yarn: \_staple \_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_staple \_\_\_\_\_  
1-Fiber: \_cotton \_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_cotton \_\_\_\_\_  
1- Color: \_red \_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_blue with black/dk blue pattern \_\_\_\_\_  
Application method: \_pieced dyed \_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_piece dyed and printed \_\_\_\_\_

Fabric Type(s): 3- \_central panel corner notch \_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_central panel border stripes \_\_\_\_\_  
3-Structure: plain weave \_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_plain weave \_\_\_\_\_  
3-Yarn: \_staple \_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_staple \_\_\_\_\_  
3-Fiber: \_cotton \_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_cotton \_\_\_\_\_  
3- Color: \_white w/ dk blue, grey, burgundy/red, and yellow \_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_yellow \_\_\_\_\_  
Application method: \_printed \_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_piece dyed \_\_\_\_\_

Fabric Type(s): 5- \_backing & black border stripe \_\_\_\_\_ 6- \_top panel base & central panel border stripe \_\_\_\_\_  
5-Structure: \_twill weave \_\_\_\_\_ 6- \_plain weave, unbalanced \_\_\_\_\_  
5-Yarn: \_staple \_\_\_\_\_ 6- \_staple \_\_\_\_\_  
5-Fiber: \_cotton \_\_\_\_\_ 6- \_cotton \_\_\_\_\_  
5- Color: \_black \_\_\_\_\_ 6- \_light green (mint) \_\_\_\_\_  
Application method: \_piece or yarn \_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_piece or yarn \_\_\_\_\_

Accession #/Identifier: HCC 2\_\_\_\_\_ Location: Hmong Cultural Center, St. Paul\_  
Examination Date: \_3/19/09\_\_

Fabric Type(s): 7-\_top panel border, reverse appliqué & appl 8-\_top panel border stripe\_\_\_\_\_

7-Structure: \_plain weave, unbalanced\_\_\_\_\_ 8-\_plain weave\_\_\_\_\_

7-Yarn: \_staple\_\_\_\_\_ 8-\_staple\_\_\_\_\_

7-Fiber: \_cotton\_\_\_\_\_ 8-\_cotton\_\_\_\_\_

7- Color: \_red\_\_\_\_\_ 8-\_cream w/black, green, and yellow\_\_

Application method: \_piece or yarn\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_print\_\_\_\_\_

Embellishment: (mark location on diagram)

- Cross stitch
- X Appliqué (on central panel)
- X Reverse Appliqué (on top panel)
- Chain stitch
- X Stain stitch (on top panel)
- X Other embroidery stitching (on top panel)

Color:

Satin stitch in yellow, blue/grey, and light pink (?faded)

A 'x' stitch with a couching stitch in yellow in X of reverse appliqué

Central panel border stripes also have small amt of white and pink fabric

Color pattern: yellow, black, mint green pink, white

Central panel border sewn in red and white thread

Top panel: reverse applique sewn with white

Border with green, pattern border with red

Remarks:

Worn and faded, stains on back

Remnant of strap is faded, especially at attachment to carrier

Strap coarsely sewn on with large stitched and black thread

Combination of blue 'batik' patterned central panel and reverse appliqué on top panel

This color and pattern on central panel indicate Blue Hmong

Reverse appliqué indicates white Hmong

Could be a hybrid piece from Thailand where different groups lived next to each other

Photographs:

Figure B17: Baby carrier HCC2



Accession #/Identifier: \_\_\_MAC Carrier\_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
Examination Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Baby Carrier Examination Data Sheet**

Structure: (draw and document dimensions)

Central panel: H 20 ¾ (20 ½), W 17

Top panel: H 4 1/8 x W 10 3/8

Outer border: 3 1/8, 3 1/8, 3 1/16

Provenance: bought by Mary Alice Chaney January 2009 at Hmong shopping area on Marion  
Imported from Thailand or Laos

Fabric Type(s): 1- \_border and applique\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_central panel base\_\_\_\_\_

1-Structure: \_satin?\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_plain weave\_\_\_\_\_

1-Yarn: \_warp-filament/weft-fil bundles\_\_\_\_ 2- \_staple \_\_\_\_\_

1-Fiber: \_synthetic\_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_cotton/synthetic \_\_\_\_\_

1- Color: \_hot pink and metallic fibers\_\_\_\_ 2- \_blue with black print\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_solution dyed\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_piece and print\_\_\_\_\_

Fabric Type(s): 3- \_top panel base\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_applique diamond and border\_\_\_\_\_

3-Structure: \_huck\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_plain weave\_\_\_\_\_

3-Yarn: \_staple\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_staple\_\_\_\_\_

3-Fiber: \_cotton?\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_cotton/synthetic\_\_\_\_\_

3- Color: \_red\_\_\_\_\_ 4- \_pink\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_piece dyed\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_piece dyed\_\_\_\_\_

Fabric Type(s): 5- \_border stripes and diamonds\_\_\_\_\_ 6- \_applique green triangle\_\_\_\_\_

5-Structure: \_plain weave\_\_\_\_\_ 6- \_plain weave\_\_\_\_\_

5-Yarn: \_filament\_\_\_\_\_ 6- \_staple\_\_\_\_\_

5-Fiber: \_synthetic\_\_\_\_\_ 6- \_cotton\_\_\_\_\_

5- Color: \_green, yellow, white, and black\_\_\_\_ 6- \_green\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_solution dyed\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_piece dyed\_\_\_\_\_

Accession #/Identifier: \_\_\_MAC Carrier\_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
Examination Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Fabric Type(s): 7-\_top panel white applique\_\_\_\_\_ 8-\_top panel applique square\_\_\_\_\_

7-Structure: \_satin?\_\_\_\_\_ 8-\_plain unbalanced\_\_\_\_\_

7-Yarn: \_filament\_\_\_\_\_ 8-\_staple\_\_\_\_\_

7-Fiber: \_synthetic\_\_\_\_\_ 8-\_cotton\_\_\_\_\_

7- Color: \_ white\_\_\_\_\_ 8-\_yellow\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_solution dyed\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_piece dyed\_\_\_\_\_

Fabric Type(s): 9-\_border stripe around corner notch\_\_\_\_\_ 10-\_backing fabric\_\_\_\_\_

9-Structure: \_plain weave\_\_\_\_\_ 10-\_plain \_\_\_\_\_

9-Yarn: \_staple\_\_\_\_\_ 10-\_bulk filament\_\_\_\_\_

9-Fiber: \_cotton\_\_\_\_\_ 10-\_synthetic\_\_\_\_\_

9- Color: \_ yellow\_\_\_\_\_ 10-\_black\_\_\_\_\_

Application method: \_piece dyed\_\_\_\_\_ Application method: \_solution dyed\_\_\_\_\_

Embellishment: (mark location on diagram)

- Cross stitch
- Appliqué
- Reverse Appliqué
- Chain stitch
- Stain stitch
- Other embroidery stitching

Color: border: yel, grn, yel, pk, wht, blk, black triangle over white, pk, yel, grn, yel, pk,  
wht, blk triangle over white, pk, yel, grn, yel, pk, wht  
Central and top panels the same

Remarks:

Pompoms- 8 yellow, 2 pink/red

All hand stitched with thread color to match fabric color

Plastic basted over central panel and top panel

Pompoms stitched on through plastic

Both attached before backing attached – no thread on backing

Central panel and backing fabric basted down the middle with blue thread

Doesn't match any other thread or fabric color



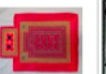


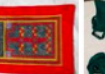
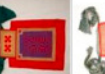
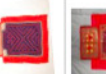



Figure B18: Baby carrier MAC





**Table C1: Characteristics of Baby Carriers (continued)**

ID #	Image	Date	Location	Hmong ID	Size inches	Shape:	Color:		Print Fabric	Border			Central Panel:			Ground Color		Top Panel:		Pompoms:
							Red	Pink		Color	Corner notch is same color as border	Tooth border	# of colors in applique	Reverse Applique	Cross Stitch	Batik	Printed	Solid Blue	White	
H5.2002.125.270		20th C	n/a	n/a	H 25.59 x W 17.71	Rectangle	X		X	X	Pink	X	X	1			X	X	X	
H5.2002.125.271		1992	n/a	n/a	H 23 x W 15.75	Rectangle	X	X	X	Red	X	X	1		X		X	X	X	
H5.2002.125.272		1993	n/a	n/a	H 26.37 x W 17.71	Rectangle	X		X	Pink	X	X	1	X			X	X	X	
H5.2002.125.273		1987	Camacrafts Chiang Khan	n/a	H 24.8 x W 16.52	Rectangle	X	X	X	Red	X	X	1		X		X	X	X	
H5.2002.277		n/a	Nong Het (Vietnam border)	n/a	H 22.82 x W 15	Rectangle	X	X	X	Pink	X	X	1	X			X	X	X	
H5.2002.278		2004	Nong Het (near Vietnam border)	n/a	H 18.80 x W 13.38	Rectangle		X	X	Red	X	X	2			X	X	X	X	
HCC1		n/a	n/a	n/a	H 21.25* x W 16.375	Rectangle	X		X	Red	X	X	1				X	X	X	
HCC2		n/a	n/a	n/a	H 22.625 x W 14.375	Rectangle	X		X	Red	X	X	1		X			X	X	
MAC		2009	n/a	n/a	H 24.875 x W 17	Rectangle	X	X	X	Pink	X	X	1					X	X	