

Project Report:

HMONG ODYSSEY

A History and a Play

by

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CURA RESOURCE COLLECTION

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Project Title: **HMONG ODYSSEY**

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PART ONE: BACKGROUND

I. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE INITIATING ORGANIZATION

A. The Idea of the Play

In order to raise both funds and public awareness, the Hmong scouts of Explorer Post 6 in St. Paul, Minnesota determined to create and produce an educational play depicting the heritage of the Hmong people and their odyssey over several thousand years from the steppes of Xinjang and the mountains of what is now China, into Indochina, and then to North America. Instrumental in this effort was a Laotian-born teenager, Ms. Xiongxee Lee, President of Post 6, whose determination and excellent organization first turned this project from a wish to a reality.

B. Community and Practical Objectives

This ambitious project, for which the scouts voted to dedicate two years, would help to strengthen their community through two important community objectives, serving as 1., an historically accurate, educational, and dignified portrayal of Hmong culture, and 2., a bridge-building experience between the Hmong people and their new American communities.

As well, the project would, in its finished form, serve several practical objectives as 1., a repeatable playscript capable of being performed by scouting youths and their families, 2., a production capable of being "travelled" within and outside the region

in a wide variety of venues (churches, auditoria, theatres, et cetera), and 3., a fundraiser for the advancement of Hmong scouting locally, regionally, and nationally.

C. Implementation Strategy

Post 6 president Xiongxee Lee led a committee which identified and prioritized eight tasks that the Post would need to undertake in order to meet its goals:

1. Find People Who Will Give Time To Work On The Play
2. Find Necessary Funds And Resources
3. Find Historical Material To Include In The Play
4. Procure The Services Of A Playwright
5. Procure The Services Of A Theatrical Advisor And Director
6. Find Performers
7. Create/Procure Sets, Properties, And Costumes
8. Find Performance Venues And Sponsors
9. Work To A Deadline Of May 1, 1998 (The Beginning Of Asian Awareness Month)

II. COLLABORATION OF THE INITIATING ORGANIZATION AND THE PLAYWRIGHT

A. First Contact

Among the eight tasks identified by Ms. Lee were the critical tasks of finding appropriate historical data for inclusion in the play and procuring the services of a playwright to dramatize that material (items three and four in the implementation strategies on page 3). In late January of 1997, Lynn Englehorn, District Scouting Commissioner for the Indianhead Council of the Boy Scouts of America, contacted Jon M. Berry, who was to become the project's playwright and theatrical advisor.

Mr. Englehorn's daughter had attended UMD and had spoken well of its theatre program. While his intent had been to ask for a guidance in finding playwrights and theatre resources in Minnesota, Mr. Englehorn soon learned that Dr. Berry was a playwright, director, and (fortuitously) an Assistant Scoutmaster with experience in working with young amateurs. Mr. Englehorn's exceptional organizational skills became immediately apparent as he shifted the conversation, establishing clear goals, a list of needs, and an appointment for an interview before any contractual agreement was to be reached. After this first contact, the playwright mailed samples of appropriate previous work for the initiating organization to assess, and drew up a rough outline of groundwork that he wished to complete before the interview.

B. Groundwork

This preliminary research was to follow three brief lines of inquiry:

1. Identifying Preliminary Resources

- a. A Preliminary Bibliography
- b. A Preliminary Survey of Human Resources:

This survey began with a telephone call to the Center for Southeast Asian Research of the University of Minnesota. As well, contacts emerged from the ESL training centers of Hamline and MacAlester Colleges. Xia Yang put the playwright in touch with Hmong ABC (Arts, Books, and Crafts) in St. Paul. The proprietors were incredibly helpful, and kept a data-base of hundreds of titles, tapes, videos, and pamphlets. After coming across a wealth of bibliographical information pointing to a collection in China, the China Center was instrumental in finding a contact in Shanghai who was an older acquaintance of the playwright.

- c. A Preliminary Survey of Institutions and Organizations:

One invaluable resource is the list researched, published and updated by Yuepheng Xiong, Hmong in Minnesota Pamphlets, Periodicals and Broad-sides. The title does not give a hint that this bibliographical survey also includes a major list of Hmong-oriented organizations in Minnesota and the Nation. Among those used by the playwright in the preliminary stages of research were:

- The Hmong American Partnership (St. Paul)
- The Hmong Cultural Center (St. Paul)
- Hmong Tapestry (A Theatrical Company, Twin Cities)
- The Hmong National Strategy Co-ordinating Committee (Contact: Dr. Yang Dao)
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

2. "Discovering" the Hmong People

The playwright was put in touch with a Hmong family sponsored by Lakeside Presbyterian Church in Duluth--the charter organization of Boy Scout Troop 15. As well, the playwright's son put him in touch with a fellow grade-school student named Hang Yang. Hang was able to introduce the playwright to several people and, through his cousin Ying, to two UMD students. While it was soon apparent that these Hmong individuals possessed an historic memory that reached back only about two generations, it was clear that they were carrying cultural traditions far older than that. At the very least, the playwright was beginning to put a human face on the project.

3. Estimating the Costs of Research, Writing, and Consultancy

A few phone calls, a probe on the internet, and a recommendation from a fellow playwright served to establish a basic fee of \$7,000 for a commissioned play at

this level. The costs of research would add to this amount; but with the wealth of information apparently available in the Twin Cities, these costs could be contained to approximately \$3500. This gave a total estimated figure of \$10,500 for the playwright's portion of the project.

C. Partnership

The interview was held in February of 1997. The playwright met with Lynn Englehorn and Xia C. Yang, District Executive for Asian Outreach of the Indianhead Council, B. S. A. The first order of business was to make sure that the playwright /consultant (at this time only a candidate for the position) and the initiating organization were working from the same plan. The playwright was given an outline of the organization's goals and objectives as well as a sketch of proposed deadlines for the project. Xia Yang clarified the position, requirements, and regulations of the Boy Scouts of America and of the Indianhead Council concerning the project. Mr. Yang further explained both the hopes and concerns of leaders of the Hmong community, and detailed the political environment in which the project would be undertaken.

The playwright then posed several key questions about the audience, performers, and intentions of the production, the answers to which would help to set the parameters for research and writing. The following is a summary.

Q: *Who is the target audience? (And what are the range of age levels, language*

abilities, and mix of cultures?)

A: The scouts were very clear that they wanted the production to engage both the Hmong community and the established American community. Because of the devastations of war, most Hmong have lost the thread of their own history. Because the U.S.A. did not divulge its relationship with the Hmong people, most established Americans lack enough background about the Hmong and their relationship with the United States to create a foundation for mutual respect. Also, since the Hmong take in the arts and other events as family units, we should expect children to attend, and all other age groups. The educational, intellectual, and linguistic backgrounds of the audience should range from extremely low to extremely high. Some of the old people would not know any English. The middle generation would be able to catch only a percentage of the English script. We should also expect the audience to be noisy.

Q: *Where will the play be performed (especially size of spaces for accoustics and movement)?*

A: Target venues include everything from churches to school cafeterias to fully-equipped stages. The show should travel well.

Q: *Who would be performing the play (ages, ethnicity, language skills)?*

A: Hmong Scouts (and possible one or two caucasian) between the ages of 13 and 18 would be performing. While it would be nice for some of the older people to perform, the language problem and the work/family schedules

would probably prohibit this.

Q: *Are Hmong musicians/music available?*

A: Many of the youth are musicians. There are two who play the Qeng, and some other traditional instruments.

Q: *Are Hmong dancers available?*

A: Almost all of the scouts are members of traditional dance groups. Dance is a major part of Hmong culture.

Q: *What would be the appropriate rate of rehearsal?*

A: A two hour block one day a week. No weekends. Most of the scouts work as well.

Q: *How many performers would be optimum?*

A: A tricky question, but there should be parts and/or duties for perhaps twenty-five youngsters.

Q: *How long should the play be?*

A: Perhaps ninety minutes to two hours.

Q: *What are the budgetary and technical resources and restrictions?*

A: Virtually no money is yet available for these things. The initiating organization is looking for guidance in this respect.

Q: *Will there be a separate director/stage manager?*

A: A woman by the name of Heather Starcke is very interested in directing the production. She has a degree in Theatre from Webster University in Missouri. She has a friend in the Twin Cities who is a professional dancer

and would like to help with movement, dance, and rehearsal.

Q: What are seen as the responsibilities and obligations of the Playwright/Consultant?

A: 1., To research and write the play; and to make changes in the script as necessary.

2., To have scripts ready for producers, director, and choreographer by October 1, 1997.¹

3., To meet with leaders and elders of the Hmong Community.

4., To advise the producers in matters of staging, and to help in choosing appropriate venues for performances.

5., To keep a high profile with the Scouts.

6., To be at a rehearsal at least once a month.

These questions answered as fully as possible, the playwright gave his assurance that he thought the project feasible; and, although he was embarrassed by being an established American who had to profess his ignorance of the Hmong, he offered to undertake the project.

At this point the matter of fees was raised; and the playwright had already decided to make a gift of half of the playwrighting fee. The playwright also suggested that the

¹This was later amended to having Part One available for rehearsal on this date, with other sections following as research and rehearsal progress dictated.

research costs of the project might be a very good fit for funding through the University of Minnesota or another community-oriented granting agency. He offered to pursue this course with the organization's approval.

A preliminary agreement being reached, the playwright further suggested and explained a presentational style of production that relied a good deal on movement (a strength of this young group, and one that would "talk across" language barriers) and a simple structure, suggested a working title: Hmong Odyssey, and promised a preliminary plan and budget proposal for research, writing, and consultancy that could be faxed to Mr. Englehorn within the week. Mr. Englehorn offered to draw up a mutual letter of agreement to be mailed after that time.

Both gentlemen provided the playwright with texts² from their own libraries as a beginning point for historical and cultural research. As well, Xia Yang identified a number of resource persons and bibliographic resources for information and help. He also offered his services as a liaison/interpreter for contact with Hmong of the "first generation." Lynn Englehorn identified Ms. Malia Lee (a University of Minnesota, Duluth biology student, Eagle Scout, and past President of Post 6) as an excellent contact and translator available to work with the playwright at his home institution. She had already been contacted and had offered her support.

²Texts

PART TWO: PLAN FOR RESEARCH

I. CONSTRAINTS UPON THE MEDIUM

Form and Content: While the *specifics* of Hmong Odyssey's content were yet to be determined, its requisite fact-based "pageant of events" and concomitant need for detailed exposition presented several problems (not the least of which would be finding a way to maintain audience interest). These problems could be addressed according to Aristotle's six elements of the drama (plot, character, thought, diction, music, spectacle). The resulting strategies gave a defining shape to the drama.

A. Plot Structure

1. Argument: The only functional plot structure for this play will be *serial*. Yet it may be possible, by using presentational narrative, to bridge the seams in the serial plot to imitate an episodic plot. After all, the Hmong history should feel to the audience like an unbroken flow, and not like a mixed bag of historical data.
2. Research Strategy: If identifiable personalities exist in Hmong legend and story who are timeless and ever-present, they will serve to soften the serial nature of the play, provide transitions, and serve as the unifying factor for the entire event.
 - a. **Attempt to find characters in legend, story, and song who recur and**

who can easily move between the mimetic and diegetic levels of the play.

- b. Attempt to find “spikes” in the long historical saga--that is, events which condense and magnify a movement, an epoch, or a critical moment in the actualization of the culture.

B. Language and Diction

1. Argument: In the most practical of terms, the performers will be struggling on a great many fronts as it is. The language of the play should be simple and speakable while retaining force. The Hmong language is very much softer than our harsh American English; and words and phrasing should be chosen that will not burden the speakers.
2. Research Strategy: Record a Hmong story or conversation in Hmong. Identify breathing phrases, rhythms, overall sound and sound combinations. Discover (through interview) if there are any “impossible” sounds that Hmong have trouble with in English.

C. Character

1. Argument: In the pageant, there can be a tendency to lose empathy with characters who are not the center of our attention, but vehicles for historic narrative. Without the seductive element of empathy, the level of interest and perceived level of personal involvement (ownership) drops. It will be impera-

tive to create *moments* and *personae* with which the audience can identify.

2. **Research Strategy: Focus on stories, evidence, and events with a high potential for *first person focus*. The audience will be better able to create a relationship with character(s) and, thereby, to identify with events.**

D. Music and Spectacle

1. **Argument:** Music will greatly enhance the ability to effect rapid shifts in mood and atmosphere. With the spectacle of the scene reduced to the physical presence of the live actors and their costume, the acoustic environment will play a crucial role.
2. **Research Strategy: Find and collect Hmong (and other?) music that will give the greatest variety of moods. Identify this music culturally (i. e., do not use wedding music for a funeral, or courtship music for a battle).**

E. Time

1. **Argument:** Constructing a chronicle (in this case a play that covers more linear territory than the Bible) widens the scope of the work in terms of dramatic time and burdens the art of compression. When the playwright tries to include too much, the result will be no better than a two-hour run-on sentence. On the other extreme, when the playwright's choices do not paint a continuous and seemingly complete picture, the result will seem thin and fractured.
2. **Research Strategy: Attempt to find, if possible and without overt invention,**

thematic threads in blocks of historical time. This *cheating* of history may improve the dramatic flow and impact, while blurring the sense of time passed. One great help in this is will be the Hmong concept of time itself. While there is a sophisticated sense of the *linear*, the Hmong, like our Medieval European forebears, have a sense of *cumulative* time. If this can be exploited dramatically (see D., Character, above) the problem may be resolved.

F. The "Magical Talking Toad" Quotient

1. Argument: Current plays have been focussing on the Hmong Story--that is, on stories that the Hmong use for entertainment, to teach lessons, and to reinforce their culture. While a chronicle play might be written that would incorporate such things as the Magical Talking Toad, the Red-Eyed Dog, or the person who comes back to life as a tiger (dog, horse, eagle, toad, bird, tree, chicken, and so forth), such a format would inevitably push the *facts* of the play into a romanticized once-upon-a-time level.
2. Research Strategy: **Read these stories for indications of belief and thinking and for signs of historical events, but not (primarily) for inclusion.**

II. CONSTRAINTS UPON THE MATERIAL

A. Legend And Documentation

1. Argument: Legend is both suspect and invaluable. It is an oral history of a people; and that history should be viewed as having begun in a time, place, and material circumstance that cannot be separated from structures of belief, the needs of a culture, and a way of telling a history. At the same time, the documentation of "fact" concerning the Hmong people is largely at the hands of the Chinese, French officials (military, religious, and political), traders in opium, silver, and lumber, the Laotian governments, the Vietnamese, and the American military and intelligence communities.
2. Research Strategy: Somewhere between the Hmong identity expressed as legend and the agendas of the peoples with whom they would interact may be areas of agreement. For example, if a Hmong legend or song says that they fought for their homeland at a certain (poetically described) place, the Chinese, while never conceding that the area in question was the Hmong's homeland, might corroborate the story with a document detailing a military campaign in the same (but geographically described) place. **Search for multiple perspectives on same and similar events. As well, search for areas of mutual benefit--not just enmity.**

B. Destruction/Erosion Of Records

1. Argument: When dealing with an oral history, the erosion of fact, the changing

of names and landscapes over time is a given. The problem is exacerbated because the Hmong experience is incredibly long. As well, written documentation may erode physically or by historiographical selection. It may be destroyed in fire, flood, war, purge, or other means.

2. Research Strategy: Remember that the result of this research is a play that can only depict the broad outlines of the Hmong experience. Not all gaps (or even centuries) can be filled. **Be honest about conjecture and speculation; and look for evidence that moves from one event to another.**

C. Key Points Of That History Are Contested

1. Argument: That the Hmong version of events will differ from that of their political adversaries needs no explanation. But even in the Hmong community, memories will differ, beliefs will clash, legends may have been handed down differently. As Xia Yang pointed out, it was important to him to have a non-Hmong write this first play simply because of the need for objectivity.
2. Research Strategy: **Again, attempt to find the common ground. While the *truth* may be in the general shape of an event, an agreeable general shape may be more satisfying than a controversial detail.**

D. Authenticity vs Diplomacy (National and Clan)

1. Argument: The Chinese record may give embarrassingly ample evidence of the genocide that the Hmong claim. As well, one family's documented and factual

story may bring dishonor on another.

2. Research Strategy: The play is a bridge-building vehicle. **Find the truth(s) if possible because they will color all later events. But leave them to the winnowing process as information is selected for the script.**

III. SUMMARY LIST OF TARGETED MATERIALS

- A Hmong History Timeline [see Appendix B]
- Maps of Linguistic Groups [see Appendix C.1]
- Maps of Migrations and Population Concentrations [see Appendix C.2-10]
- Stories And Characters from Documented History
- Stories And Characters from Documented (Published) Oral History
- Stories and Characters From Life [see Bibliography and Appendix D]
- Songs And Poems And Music
- Funerals, Weddings, Births, Celebrations
- Farming, Craft, Religion, Medicine, Cosmology
- Family, Clan, Race
- Humor, Sentiment

PART THREE: A CHRONOLOGY OF RESEARCH

II. MARCH TO MAY: BAPTISM BY TOTAL IMMERSION

Before funding was to be available in the summer through the CCRR, a Vice Chancellor's Small Grant was sought and awarded for travel to collections and the research libraries on the Twin Cities' campus of the University of Minnesota. The playwright began travel, reading, and Internet searches in March of 1997 knowing that the time between March and May would be absorbed, for the most part, by end-of-the-year academic duties. This period, therefore, was utilized for "osmotic education." That is, the playwright undertook a good deal of reading in many subjects, a study of maps, a tedious regimen of blind internet searches, and a general laying-in of the foundations of vocabulary and understanding.

III. JUNE: THE HMONG IN SILHOUETTE

By June, the silhouette of the Hmong people began to emerge. The study of History is the study of change, but the study of Culture reveals enduring traditions. Among the latter, the playwright was to identify several clear "personalities" in legend and story.

- A. The first was Shao: an old and wise man to whom everyone would go for advice on any subject. Shao inculcates the lesson that no one can make an important decision alone. Shao endures through the centuries as a man

who guides his people (unlike Moses) by the wisdom of his experience in the world.

- B. The second was Nzeu: the “youngest daughter,” always the last to marry, the last to understand, but the first to ask questions, to be bold, to state her mind.
- C. The third was Pao: often an orphan, the most likely to need assistance, the most likely to be inventive, the one who finally seeks out Shao.
- D. Another part of this silhouette involved the Qeng--a Hmong ceremonial musical instrument found unaltered in form and use in ancient Chinese painting, in archaeological sites, in the far-flung Hmong villages of modern China, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and Burma. The playwright found a symbolic resonance in the Qeng and could attach to it the enduring aspects of the culture. In the same way, he began to outline the action of the play upon several “stories” woven together by enduring personalities.

IV. JULY: LETTERS AND A TIMELINE OUT OF ASIA

Hmong students had been canvassing relatives and local Hmong for stories that would help to fill out the “facts” of the War years with first-hand experience. Responses began to arrive in the form of letters, e-mail, and voice tapes in July.

Some of these are included in Appendix D. As these were being processed, information arrived from China.

Beginning in the early 1980's, Chinese restrictions on ethnic minorities began to ease. A series of studies of the Miao-Yao and other groups were undertaken by scholars, anthropologists, and even ministries of tourism. When the playwright discovered bibliographical references to these studies and particularly to those now housed at Shanghai University, he contacted Dr. Yao Hai-sing (an acquaintance made at the University of Minnesota in the early eighties). Dr. Yao was gracious enough to create a precis of targeted information, to translate, and to forward notes to the playwright. These notes became an invaluable source for the creation of a Hmong time-line (see Appendix B) and a matrix for the action of the play.

V. JULY: THE SCENARIO

This action gathered from the timeline was then developed into a scenario--a plot outline defining the shape of the drama in four major Acts or Units:

- A. Unit I: Origins
- B. Unit II: The First and Second Migrations
- C. Unit III: The Third or Great Migration into Indonesia
- D. Unit IV: The War in Southeast Asia, Culminating in the Flight to America

VI. JULY: A MEETING WITH DR. YANG DAO

The scenario and part of the first Act were faxed to Mr.s Englehorn and Yang, who, in turn, provided a copy to Dr. Yang Dao. This gentleman was the Minister of Economic Development and Education in Laos when the government collapsed. He was the first modern Hmong to be educated abroad (in France), and has been an indefatigable advocate for the advancement of his people. His researches and contacts in Asia are enormous; and he gently corrected the playwright on certain matters of speculation and lapses in clarity. His elucidation of the human climate during the War, his explanation of contentions, his personal remembrances of Lyfoung Touby and General Vang Pao, his participation in Paris talks and conferences in China all broadened the background of the final act of the play.

VII. AUGUST: THE PLAY IN THE ROUGH

Now overstuffed with detail and information, the scenario of the play was unwieldy as a theatrical piece. The winnowing process cut many stories, blended others, and attempted to leave a simple line of narrative focussing on the Hmong Odyssey--a centuries-long search for freedom and self-determination.

The draft of the play was ready by mid-August and forwarded to the producers and the leaders of Post Six. Because the playwright's duties at the University of Minnesota, Duluth were to recommence September 1, the following schedule for the completion of the playwriting was laid out.

September:	1	Approval of Unit 1
		Preliminary approval of Unit 2
	15	Auditions
October:	1	Rehearsals of Unit 1 Begin
		Rewrites of Unit 2 to Producer
	15	Draft of Unit 3 to Producer
November	1	Rehearsals of Unit 2 Begin
		Producer Returns Unit 3 to Playwright with Comments
	15	Rewrites of Unit 3 to Producer for Approval
		Draft of Unit 4 to Producer
December	1	Rehearsals of Unit 3 Begin
		Producer Returns Fourth Unit to Playwright with Comments
	15	Rewrites of Unit 4 to Producer for Approval
January	1	Rehearsals of Unit 4 Begin

VIII. COMPLETING THE SCRIPT IN PERFORMANCE

The completed playscript can be found in Appendix E. This final format was shaped not only by those factors mentioned in the preceding sections, but also by the direct and indirect input of the cast of performers.

A. Speech and Language

The cast was energetic and determined and intelligent from the very beginning. However, the reading and English-speaking skills of the group (some students had only been in the U.S.A. three years!) were lower than the audition interviews led both the playwright and the director to expect. One of the first tasks in rewrite was to soften and simplify the language.

B. Movement and Dance

Although between the ages of 14 and 18, the Hmong students displayed a far greater sophistication in movement, strength, and spatial/symbolic understanding than the average American student. The Choreographer translated her delight into a bid for major movement elements in the production. The playwright and choreographer then met with the cast in several sessions in order to learn from them the movement, meaning, and rhythm of their traditional "physicalizations." The playwright developed areas within the script and in transitional moments to utilize dance and fight choreography as much as possible.

C. Emotion

The playwright, used to writing for an American audience which needs help to find empathy, over-wrote many scenes in the original. These “performers” had all been through situations that would strain the mental health of the strongest. At times, a word, a gesture, or a situation brought forward in the play would cause tremendous emotion in the cast. The playwright and the cast then sought ways to say the same things more simply, even silently. Still, when performances began in May of 1998, some cast members would become overwrought. The playwright will never forget how, when one young woman broke down in performance, a young man stepped forward and continued her speech while she carried out her movement. He had memorized the entire play; and he stepped in both gently and with confidence whenever chance called him forward.

D. Masks

The company had hoped to induce Caucasian Scouts to take the part of French and American people. This did not happen; and the cast decided to make masks. They made French, American, Chinese, Tai, and Lao masks--indicating the differences in these features as seen through Hmong eyes.

E. The Audience

A Hmong audience is noisy, talkative, restless. They will pack into the seats with

the men standing at the walls and sitting in the aisles. The children will nurse, play, giggle, explore, and wander onto the stage. And yet there was always general laughter at humor, deep silence at tragedy, and an engagement in the action of the play that was refreshing and exhilarating. The audience was the measure of the success of the play.

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II. WORKS IN ANTHOLOGIES

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III. FILM AND VIDEO RECORDING

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Secret War, Secret Slaughter: Unexploded Ordinance in Laos. London: Bicycle Trail Films, 1995. VHS. *Uses newsclips to follow U.S. Involvement in Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia. Interviews reveal how unexploded bombs still contaminate farmland, killing and injuring thousands.*

Latest Encounter: The Hmong in Minnesota, The. 1991. VHS. *Part of 1991-92 Honor's Symposium taped at Normandale Community College, and featuring Dr. Yang Dao.*

APPENDIX A

HMONG ODYSSEY PROJECT PROPOSAL

- I. Project Title: HMONG ODYSSEY
- II. Project Supervisor: Dr. Jon M. Berry
Department of Theatre (UMD)
148 Marshall Performing Arts Center
(218) 726-6159
jberry@d.umn.edu
- III. Co-Sponsor: Boy Scouts of America
Indianhead Council
- IV. Contacts: Xia C. Yang, District Executive for Asian Outreach
(612) 224-1891 ext. 125

Lynn E. Englehorn, District Scouting Commissioner
(612) 292-4592

V. Project Description:

Background: Minnesota is home to the largest Hmong community in the United States and to the largest Hmong Boy Scout programs. The success of the Hmong Scouting Program has been remarkable; but growth has led to a shortage in available leadership, charter organizations, and funding. In order to raise both funds and public awareness, the scouts have determined to create an educational play showing the heritage of the Hmong people and their odyssey over several thousand years from the Sino-Siberian steppe, through what is now China, into Indochina, and then to North America. Project supervisor, Dr. Jon M. Berry, has been commissioned to help create this work and will serve as playwright and production consultant/director.

Importance of the Project: Although the idea of the project began as a simple fund-raising solution, the nature of the project--to enlighten the public and to create a pageant of Hmong heritage--necessarily involves a great deal of community engagement. Even in its earliest stages, the project involves many people and several institutions in a co-creative effort. The Hmong Odyssey Project will help to strengthen its community through two important Community Objectives, serving as 1., an historically accurate, educational, and dignified depiction of Hmong culture, and 2., a bridge-building experience between the Hmong people and their new American communities. As well, Hmong Odyssey should, in its finished form, serve several Practical Objectives as 1., a repeatable playscript capable of being performed by scouting youths and their families, 2., a production capable of being "travelled" within and outside the region in a wide variety of venues (churches, auditoriums, theatres, et cetera), and 3., a fund-raiser for the advancement of Hmong scouting locally, regionally, and nationally.

Research: The creation of Hmong Odyssey will be undertaken in four phases:

- Phase I: Historical/Cultural/ Aesthetic Research, Level 1
- Phase II: Playwriting
- Phase III: Cultural/ Aesthetic Research, Level 2 (Production Strategies)
- Phase IV: Play Production, Rehearsal and Performance

It is for the first and third (research) phases that funding is sought from the Center for Community and Regional Research. Historical and cultural data will be collected from written materials through traditional scholarship (for example within the library of the University's Refugee Studies Center). But other materials such as songs, poems, oral histories, and stories will be collected by audio recording while examples of costume, dance, music, theatre performance and rites will be collected by video recording. The bulk of these latter materials will be gathered from the Hmong community in Northeast Minnesota and Northern Wisconsin. Once this material is collected, it will serve two purposes in the project. First, it will educate the playwright and "inform" the play that will be written and performed. Second, material gathered may find its way into the finished work. Video and audio tapes, transcripts and other materials collected from Northeast Minnesota and Northern Wisconsin will also become a permanent record for the Hmong community and for the region and could be housed in the Northeast Minnesota Historical Center on the UMD campus.

Completion: The premiere of the play is scheduled to be presented in May (Asian Awareness Month) of 1998.

Final Report: After the research phases of the project are finished, a report will be made to to the Center for Community and Regional Research detailing the outcomes of the project. At the same time, a paper on the project should be completed and publication sought in a professional journal such as Theatre Studies.

VI. Student Research Assistants:

The success of the Hmong Odyssey Project will depend, to a great extent, on the use of Hmong students at the University of Minnesota, Duluth and their peers and contacts in Northeast Minnesota, the Twin Cities (including the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities and other institutions), and North America generally. Because much of the material collected and interviews held will be in the Hmong language, it is imperative that Hmong Student Assistants serve as both liaisons and "cultural guides." Independent Study credits in the Department of Theatre will be available to these students. The project will utilize three to five volunteer students coordinated by one paid Research Assistant who will also serve as a translator and contact person for the Hmong community.

- A. Number of Research Assistants:
 - 1. Volunteer: 3-5 (Hmong-speaking)
 - 2. Paid: 1 (Hmong-speaking)
- B. Work Hours:
 - 1. Volunteer: 3 hrs/wk X 20 wks
 - 2. Paid: 8 hrs/wk X 25 wks = 200 hrs
- C. Duties:
 - 1. Volunteers: Materials collection, translation, liaison, cultural guide
 - 2. Paid: Supervision and coordination of volunteers; materials collection, translation, liaison, cultural guide; assist Project Supervisor with contacts, production strategies
- D. Independent Study Cr: Th 3171 or Th 5171, (6 cr. maximum)

VII. Budget:

A.	Faculty Stipend:	\$3,475.00	[Co-Sponsor Portion]
B.	Student Salary:	\$2,200.00	[CCRR Portion]
C.	Research Supplies:		
1.	Photocopy	\$120.00	[CCRR Portion]
2.	Binding	\$60.00	[CCRR Portion]
3.	Audio Tapes:	\$35.00	[CCRR Portion]
4.	Video Tapes:	\$60.00	[CCRR Portion]
5.	Misc. Clerical:	\$95.00	[CCRR Portion]
D.	Travel:		
1.	Mileage (3,000 X .26)	\$780.00	[CCRR Portion]
2.	Lodging:	\$0	[CCRR Portion]
3.	Meals:	\$150.00	[CCRR Portion]
E.	Copyright Registration:	\$25.00	[Co-Sponsor Portion]
F.	Co-Sponsor Portion:	\$3,500.00	
G.	CCRR Portion Requested:	<u>\$3,500.00</u>	
H.	Total Budget:	\$7,000.00	

APPENDIX B

HMONG ODYSSEY TIMELINE

APPENDIX B

HMONG TIMELINE TO 1978

HMONG

WESTERN HISTORY

BCE

5000. According to one legend, the Hmong "inhabited a distant land where days and nights are six months long, where lakes froze and people wore furs." Hmong-like artifacts are found along the Yellow River valley.
4500. Hmong mummies testify to a thriving population in East Xinjiang. They are cut off from other Hmong to the east by a south-ward incursion of Siberian Mongols.
3000. Ancient Chinese historians begin to mention interactions with the Hmong which they at first call "sprouts." At this time, the Chinese are a relatively small and loosely knit group of northeastern coastal tribes moving inland along the rivers. The Hmong are living along the Yellow River and have sizeable population at the southern bend.
2700. Chinese historians of a later period relate how Chinese Emperor U-Wang's Hmong minister Tche-you unifies the Hmong into a rebel army and routs U-Wang and his troops from the capitol.
2500. The Hmong stretch from Hopei and Shantung provinces down to the bend of the Yellow river in upper Honan. Here, they share the environment with the Yangshao Chinese, using planting and building practices that still serve them.
2000. The migration of rice-farming Lungshan Chinese into the area absorbs the Yangshao, while Chinese historians relate that the Hmong, although partners in trade and commerce, remain a distinct group and live peaceably with Chinese.
-
1600. The Lungshan are displaced by the Shang, as the Shang dynasty begins [1600-1028 BCE]. The Hmong are subdued and used as feudal peasants. The term "Miao" or "weeds" is adopted by the Chinese for Hmong and other minorities in the region. But definite names are given to unassimilated Chinese tribes. With Shang expansion, the Hmong expand as well, but are broken up into eight-family collectives to tend the land of the Shang. The Hmong now forbid marriage within a collective--the young men having to risk death by crawling at night to a different collective to conduct their "whisper courtship."
1066. The Chou (Zhou) Chinese begin a major struggle against the Shang for ascendancy. The Hmong readily enter the struggle on the side of the Chou.
1028. The Chou dynasty begins under Emperor Wu, who banishes the Hmong fighters--his former allies-- to the mountains in southern Kansu where it is hoped that they will help subdue the Keh-Lao. Soon after pushing the Keh-Lao to the south, these Hmong drift far into the
4241. Egyptians devise calendar. Earliest exact date in history.
2575. Construction begins on the Pyramids of Giza.
1600. The Exodus?
1400. Israelites enter Canaan.
1100. The fall of Troy.
1020. King Saul unifies Israel.
1000. King David rules Israel.

- mountains, beyond Chou control. Attempts to lure them back fail; and the Hmong prefer freedom over choice farmland. These Hmong drift further away--perhaps into Tibet--and disappear from the Chinese record. Their lineage is unknown at this time.
826. Hmong remaining under Chinese control eventually erupt in revolt. They are met by General Fang-chou with 300,000 troops and 3,000 chariots. The Hmong are soundly defeated, and "eradication" begins.
800. The remaining Hmong begin their first great migration. Some go east to the sea (the Cowerey Shell Hmong and the Shrimp Hmong); some to Kwangsi (the Orange Blossom Hmong). The majority fled into the mountains of Szechwan and Kweichow where they met the Keh-Lao. The Keh-Lao were driven even further south; and the Hmong entered a period of unprecedented peace.
256. The feudal state of Ch'in takes control by military supremacy, but the Hmong are left to themselves. The Ch'in focus on the pacification of the north.
206. The Han dynasty begins--focusing its expansion to the south. The Hmong number and strength have grown; and there is evidence in the Chinese record that the Hmong have a written language. A sizeable population has spilled over from Szechwan and Kwei-chow into Hunan and Kwangsi; and Han expeditions toward Tonkin begin to harass them.
- CE
25. The Han attack the kingdom of Chiao-Chih Chun in Kwangsi and Tonkin. There, they easily defeat montagnard Hmong and Tonkin people--pushing them into what is now Northern Vietnam. A bronze column is erected on the Tonkin border--the southern limit of China.
47. General Liu-Shang is sent to put down Hmong expanding into Hunan and chafing under Chinese rule. His army moves up the Yangtze River into Hmong territory; and he was never heard from again. General Ma-yuan follows, engages the Hmong, but is also defeated. General Tou-chang then entered the Hmong lands in order to burn the villages. He continues this for three years.
100. The Hmong now control all of Kweichow and Hunan, and have expanded into Hupeh. Tibetan Nomads have begun to push them from eastern Szetchwan. Quietly, Hmong begin to increase their presence in Honan, Shensi, and Anhwei until they have become the second largest ethnic group in central China.
- THE HMONG KINGDOM
400. While the leader of the Hmong is called a King (Kai), and leaders of smaller units under him are Little Kings (Kaitong), the Hmong Kingdom is a republican government of federated Hmong states. They have a fairly high organizational structure, a legal system, and a system of written records. The government is sophisticated and functional, with high
961. Solomon rules Israel and builds temple.
900. Homer creates the Iliad and the Odyssey.
776. The first Olympics are held.
753. Rome is founded as an Etruscan town.
490. The battle of Marathon Pass.
243. Livius Andronicus writes the first recorded Roman Play.
46. Julius Caesar becomes Emperor of Rome.
27. Emperor Augustus reigns to AD 14.
30. Jesus of Nazareth is put to death at Jerusalem.
453. Atilla the Hun dies.

- participation throughout the entire community. The land in the mountains is poor, however, and individual families constantly move. It is clusters of these units that are Hmong states--not geographic regions.
550. The Hmong reach the zenith of their power and influence. The Han dynasty is losing central control. Mongols are pushing from the north and Tibetans from the west. Some of the richest lands in mineral wealth and the cash crop of opium (imported along the silk road from Turkei, and now grown in China) and the largest fighting force is now under Hmong control. Various Emperors appoint Hmong to high positions--courting their favor. Hmong labor helps build the Great Wall.
618. Li Yuan establishes the T'ang Dynasty and immediately begins an attack on Hmong territory. The Hmong are undefeated but begin to be a kingdom within an empire--operating under a dual governmental system.
907. Chinese adventurer Ma Yin brakes away from the Empire, claiming most of Hunnan as his own independent state. The Chinese induced the Hmong to fight Ma Yin, but did not reinforce them. The Hmong were devastated. The Imperial Chinese then wiped out Ma Yin and his forces. The Hmong were at the end of their military power.
950. Hmong Kai, Tchu Kyou Toua Hang meets the Chinese of the Sung Dynasty in battle and is victorious. As part of a peace treaty, his daughter is to wed the Emperor's son, but this is a ruse; and she dies in prison. The Chinese return and soundly defeat the Hmong.
1150. The Sung bring in Chinese colonists who are given land taken from the Hmong and other ethnic minorities. The Hmong are slowly squeezed out of Hunan (except for small numbers) and are contained in the mountains of Szetchwan and Kweichow. The Sung require that the Hmong wear certain colors--hoping to separate them into different small groups which would be difficult to unify. This tends to make the clans official units which now assume great political importance. However, the Hmong still retain a strong tribal identity. The Sung then turned to matters of commerce.
- DATE. The Mongols become the emperors of all China. Although military campaigns were made into Hmong areas, the mountains were not penetrated; and the Hmong were left to themselves.
1368. The Ming Dynasty is formed by Buddhist monk Zhu Yuanzhang. A trade road is to be built to Burma through Hmong territory; and the Lolo are granted authority over the Hmong in the area. This leads to frequent revolts. Over 40,000 Hmong are killed in raids on villages and strong-holds; and a bounty is paid for Hmong heads.
1492. The Hmong wall is erected to keep Hmong migrations out of Hunnan. Hmong are forbidden all outside trade.
1613. The Hmong begin breeding mountain ponies for warfare and soon become respected horsemen.
1640. The Manchurians seize control of Beijing and create the Manchu Dynasty.
476. The Frankish Merovingian/Carolingian Dynasty begins in Europe and will last until 887.
516. Arthur wins decisive battles against the Saxons in what is now Wales.
800. Charlemagne becomes the first Holy Roman Emperor.
980. Vikings under Canute of Denmark control all of Britain.
1066. The Norman Conquest of England.
1163. Pope alexander III lays the foundation stone of Notre Dame in Paris.
1215. King John signs the Magna Carta.
1218. Mongols control Moscow
1271. Marco Polo at court of Kublai Khan until 1295.
1368. Notre Dame Cathedral is completed.
1492. Columbus sails to the New World.
1613. Galileo works on sunspots.
1643. Louis XIV begins his reign.

1661. Various Chinese revolts are led, but nothing is gained. The Hmong harbor Chinese rebels and learn the manufacture and use of the powder rifle. Now armed with modern weaponry, the Hmong begin to assume control over their region once again.
1664. The French pour money into the French East India Company whose dealings are centered in Tonkin. The British expand into Burma and Southern China.
1700. Huge taxes, forced education in Chinese, and seizure of property enrage the Hmong.
1727. Chinese Prince Ortai launches an all-out war against the Hmong which will last for fifty years.
1746. Several hundred Hmong migrate into Northern Indonesia to escape Chinese repression. This sets up the "highway" by which the Hmong will undertake their second great migration.
1767. Manchu Emperor Ch'ien-lung begins a nine-year campaign against the Hmong in Kin-tchuen which will cost more Chinese lives and money than the entire take-over of Turkestan. At first, the Chinese cannot even enter Hmong territory.
1768. Chinese General Ouen-fou "disappears" with 120,000 well-armed troops.
1776. Sonom, Hmong king of Kin-tchuen is taken prisoner with 250 family and Court members by Han General Akoui for Manchu Emperor Ch'ien-lung. They were executed, and their heads put on public display. Ch'ien-lung began to eradicate the Hmong in the highlands. 10-12,000 Hmong were kept as slaves. Hmong records are destroyed; and Hmong are not allowed to read or write.
1789. The Hmong still continue to fight, but more and more garrisons are built to control them.
1806. Chinese engineers rebuild the Hmong wall and erect 1,000 new garrisons in Kweichow.
1818. Migrations into higher mountains to the south are undertaken by Blue And Green Hmong. In order to break down ethnic resistance, the Emperor orders that Chinese men take minority women as wives. The Hmong speed up their migrations: White Hmong moved north to Szechwan, Black Hmong to Hunnan, and Flowery Hmong to Yunnan. When the Muslim Haw revolted in Yunnan, the Hmong stood with them. Bloody fighting continued for years.
1816. Ton Ma, a Chinese opium trader, led the Lo clan across the border into Lao to establish them high in the mountains in prime opium-growing country. The Lo prospered, and Pa See Lo became Kaitong of the area around Nong Het.
1850. The Ly clan from southern Szechwan finds its way to Nong Het following the Panthay Rebellion. The smaller Moua clan also settles there. Each of the three clans had its own kaitong, which created some problems, but a return to the type of republicanism of the old Hmong Kingdom helped the three clans prosper together under the Lo--who had settled first.
1855. Word of the Nong Het community draws Hmong into Laos and Tonkin.
1860. The Taiping rebellion in China sends thousands of Hmong and Chinese over the border into Tonkin. They were organized as a military force which defeated the Tonkinese border
1648. Charles I is beheaded by Parliament.
1661. Charles II is restored to English throne.
- [Louis] and British expansion continues in America.
1746. George Washington enters politics.
1773. The Boston Tea Party.
1776. The Declaration of Independence.
1789. The French Revolution.
1804. Napoleon is crowned French Emperor.
1816. Napoleon celebrates one year in exile on the island of Saint Helena.
1837. Queen Victoria begins her reign.
1853. President Millard fillmore sends Admiral Perry and a US fleet to force Japan to open up to US markets.
1860. Abraham Lincoln elected US president.

- guards and seized land along the Song Chay River--moving toward Hanoi.
1861. With their arrival in the delta region of Tonkin, Malaria and other diseases began to conquer the Hmong. Weakened, they were next beset by troops mounted on elephants and bearing French weaponry. The Hmong retreated into the mountains close to the Chinese border, where they remained undisturbed.
1863. The French make Cambodia a protectorate.
1865. Sioung claims to be a magical king, and leads the Hmong on raids of other villages. His cruelty leads to his assassination.
1866. Shue Cha, a village chief in the mountains, begins a slow ascent to prominence. His Hmong clansmen cut and sell coffin-wood trees, and give the French a monopoly on the lumber. His opium harvests are sold exclusively to the Chinese.
1874. The Chinese "officially" recognize the borders of Vietnam and Laos, but allow Chinese brigades to run marauding operations across the border. These groups would all be known as the Black Flags.
1884. The French conquer Vietnam and Laos.
1894. The Chinese recognize Shue Cha as sovereign in his area; and the French do the same as they now control Tonkin and parts of Laos.
1896. The French levy an opium tax on the Laotian Hmong. The Lo kiatong organized an armed raid on Kieng Khouang city in protest. The Hmong are cut down by the French weapons. The Lo fall from authority; and Tong Ger Moua assumes control of the Laotian Hmong.
1897. Tong Ger Moua reaches a settlement with the French. French exploitation of the Hmong decreases; and the Hmong now have a voice in decisions affecting them. The French promised protection against marauders; but did nothing to curb exploitation by Vietnamese and Laotian officials.
1914. Increasing battles with Black Flags provoke the French into full scale, pitched battles. The Black Flags are supported by anti-French Vietnamese and Laotians. The Hmong have become fairly successful guerilla fighters against the trained Black Flags.
1915. Yang Yilong and his guerrillas are recruited by the French to aid them in harassing the Black Flags. French-Hmong relations reach an all-time high.
1916. French taxes are again raised on the Hmong.
1917. Pa Chay leads a rebellion against the French in Vietnam.
1922. Pa chay is assassinated.
1939. Touby Lyfoung becomes tasseng of the Laotian Hmong. He is a skilled diplomat, and brings the Hmong into the political life of Southeast Asia.
1940. France falls to Germany; and Japan sends troops into French Indochina. A small French resistance called the Maquis is aided by the Hmong and other ethnic minorities.
1944. Paris is liberated; and France begins a full-scale resistance against the Japanese in Indochina. Hmong behind Touby become a military asset as guides and guerrillas. Faydang, a Hmong in opposition to Touby, aids the Japanese. Ho Chi Minh, a European-educated Vietnamese,
1861. American Civil War begins.
1863. The Gettysburg Address.
1865. American Civil war ends. Lincoln Shot.
1876. George Armstrong Custer dies.
1884. Mark Twain publishes Huckleberry Finn.
1894. Sherlock Holmes uses cocaine and opium.
1897. Queen Victoria celebrates her diamond jubilee.
1903. Kitty hawk and the Ford motor Company.
1914. WWI begins.
1939. Adolph Hitler Invades Poland and Czechoslovakia, begins his assault on France.

- organizes anti-Japanese resistance in North Vietnam (Tonkin) with U.S. backing.
1945. The war is over; and France reoccupies South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Ho Chi Minh's forces--well armed and trained, spearhead an independence movement in the North. The Vietminh are under the direction of General Vo Nguyen Giap. Uneasy peace.
In March, with all French administrators imprisoned by the Japanese, Prince Phetsarath moves toward independence and forms a new government and constitution by October. French commandos parachute into Laos and force King Sisa-vang Vong to renounce independence and strip the Prince of all power. At once, Touby's forces join the French in driving the Vietminh back across the Laotian border. The Hmong are allowed to claim villages and farmland left empty by the Vietminh. Faydang's forces join the Vietminh.
1946. The Vietminh and French clash, beginning a very long war.
1949. China becomes communist.
1950. The French need Hmong fighters for their continued war; and will finance the war with Hmong opium. Operation X is launched: secretly bringing Hmong-grown opium to Saigon for sale to inter-national drug syndicates, with profits going to the training of Vietnamese and Laotian guerilla fighters.
A Vietminh offensive, aided by China, pushes the French off of the Tonkin/China border.
A Korean offensive, aided by China, threatens all of Korea. The Americans enter the Korean War, and increase aid to the French in Indochina.
Montagnard Hmong are recruited as guerrillas to help the French win back the border areas of Tonkin. The Hmong had been fighting Black Flags and Vietminh for almost a century, and welcomed the French aid for THEIR freedom fight.
1951. Chao Quang Lo assumes leadership in North Tonkin, and he and his Hmong partisans defeat Vietminh and Chinese battalions.
1952. Three Chinese divisions attack Chao Quang Lo. He flees north into the mountains of China, regroupes, and filters back into the area.
1953. Two Chinese and one Vietminh division attack Chao Quang Lo on the north and west. After a month of fighting, Chao Quang Lo is dead. The French had been pushed back into South Vietnam; and the Chinese supply lines remained open.
Vietminh and Pathet Lao troops unite in Northeastern Laos, routing the French. The Hmong, led by Vang Pao, aid the retreat. Touby Lyfoung's guerrillas supplied the French with vital information; and the French and Lao forces fortified the Plain of Jars. Touby and young officer Vang Pao help repel Giap's invasion.
1954. Dien Bien Phu falls to the Vietminh. The Geneva accord recognizes North Vietnam as an independent nation and requires the French to withdraw from both North Vietnam and Laos. Although the Vietnam-ese are also required to withdraw from Laos, they do not.

1957. The NVA controls border provinces along the Ho Chi Minh trail; and the Pathet Lao begin to exercise political power in the government. With France out of Laos, The United States increases support to the Laotian government through the CIA. Green Berets begin to work in Laos.
1959. Fighting breaks out between the Royal Laotian Army and NVA-backed Pathet Lao troops. Civil war. Vang Pao assumes command of the 10th Infantry Battalion on the Plain of Jars.
1960. A new coalition government is formed in Laos, and the communists increase pressure on the Plain of Jars.
1961. An official cease-fire is called, but Communist and neutralist forces assault Vang Pao at Padong. NVA troops begin to bolster the Pathet Lao; and the nature of the war changes. America steps up its aid.
1962. Vang Pao locates his headquarters on the plateau of Long Cheng. The Americans build a huge airstrip; and thousands of refugees flood in. Hmong fighter pilots begin training; and Hmong are made regulars in the military. Many small airstrips are built high in the mountains by Hmong work crews. Hmong infantry control the high jungles and save the lives of downed US pilots.
1963. Vang Pao and the CIA lead an offensive after Vang Pao gains control of most of Sam Neua Province.
1964. Vang Pao, aided by American bombers, push the NVA back almost to the North Vietnam border. Offensives in South Vietnam occupy the best of the NVA and Vietcong troops. The tide seems to be turning.
1965. Christmas. In an attempt to create a peace initiative, President Johnson halts bombing for 37 days--just enough time for the NVA to rush replacements into South Vietnam and to set up a major offensive into Laos. Vang Pao is wounded, but his Hmong and Laotian forces hold.
1968. Long Cheng and other refugee centers are swollen to the size of cities. Vang Pao has increased the size of territories held. But the Ho Chi Minh trail is intact. The NVA launches a major offensive against Vang Pao's troops and are defeated. The huge offensive has left the communist positions on the Plain of Jars vulnerable; and Vang Pao attacks.
1969. Vang Pao captures the Plain of Jars. US congress passes the Cooper Amendment: banning additional US funds for aid in Laos. Immediately, the NVA attack with new Soviet equipment, tanks and aircraft. Vang Pao retreats to Long Cheng.
1972. 11,000 rounds of NVA artillery have fallen on Long Cheng in four months. (2ph). Henry Kissinger informs Laos that all aid will be halted as soon as a peace agreement has been made with North Vietnam. A general ceasefire is called, but NVA and Pathet Lao forces use the time to gain more territory.
1974. A new coalition government is formed, but fighting continues in the provinces. Hmong who had become an integral part of the Laotian government are removed. Vang Pao's hands are tied in the field.

1975. Vang Pao is granted political asylum in the US. In Laos, Mass migrations of Hmong begin. Some flee to the mountains for safety, but large groups are rounded up to be sent to re-education camps. A large pocket of Hmong resistance remains around Phu Bia mountain. Soviet gunships bring "red and yellow rain"--chemicals dropped on the forests. Food, water, and land are heavily contaminated. 45-50,000 Hmong die in the Phu Bia region. Elsewhere, napalm is dropped on crops just before harvest. Thousands of Hmong are left to starve. Weakened Hmong flee to the Mekong River, running a gauntlet of Pathet Lao bullets, chemical weapons, landmines, fatigue and disease. Of those who attempt to flee Laos into Thailand, less than a third will survive. 40,000 will reach Thailand in 1975 alone.
1976. Thailand halts Hmong who are finding refuge in Hmong areas of North Thailand, putting them in refugee camps instead. Chang Khong. Chang Kham. Ban Nam Yao. Sob Tuang. Ban Vinai.
1978. Phu Bia is "pacified." Some Hmong retreat far into the northern Mountains. Here, some are aided by the Chinese who attempt to keep guerrillas on the attack against Vietnam. Of 50,000 Hmong in the Thai refugee camps, 50% opt to emigrate. Some emigrate to France, where they know the language, some to Australia and Europe. But the largest number emigrates to the United States where Vang Pao has gone.

APPENDIX C

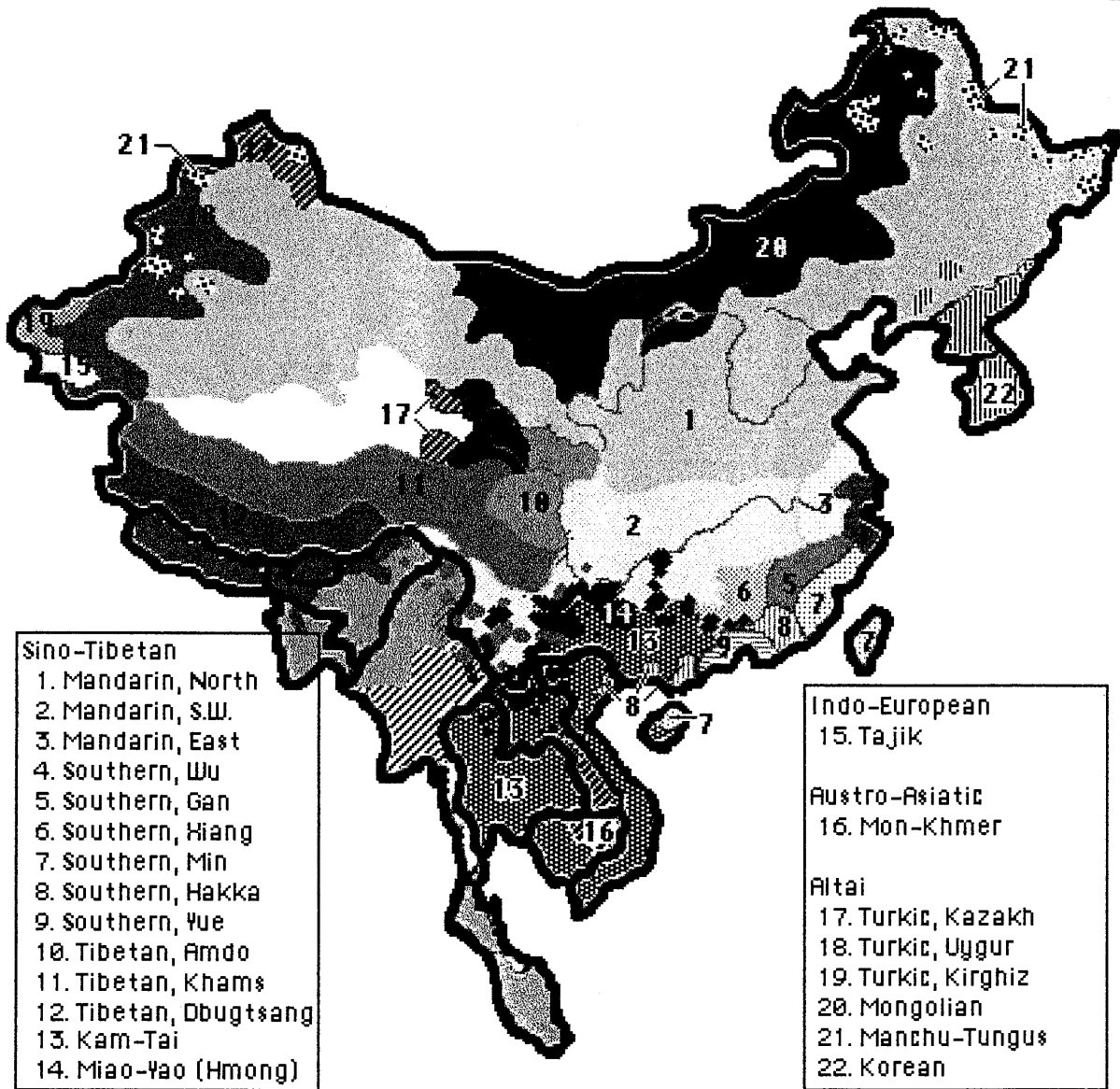
HMONG ODYSSEY MAPS

- C.1 East Asian Linguistic Groups
- C.2 Evidence of Hmong Presence: Neolithic Period
- C.3 Hmong Presence in the Shang Empire
- C.4 Hmong Presence in the Zhou (Chou) Empire
- C.5 Hmong Presence in the Han Dynasty
- C.6 The Hmong Kingdom in the T'ang Dynasty
- C.7 Hmong Presence in the Song Dynasty
- C.8 Hmong Presence in the Yüan Dynasty
- C.9 Hmong Presence in Modern China, 1816
- C.10 Hmong Migration into Indo-China
- C.11 Important Place Names During the "Vietnam War"

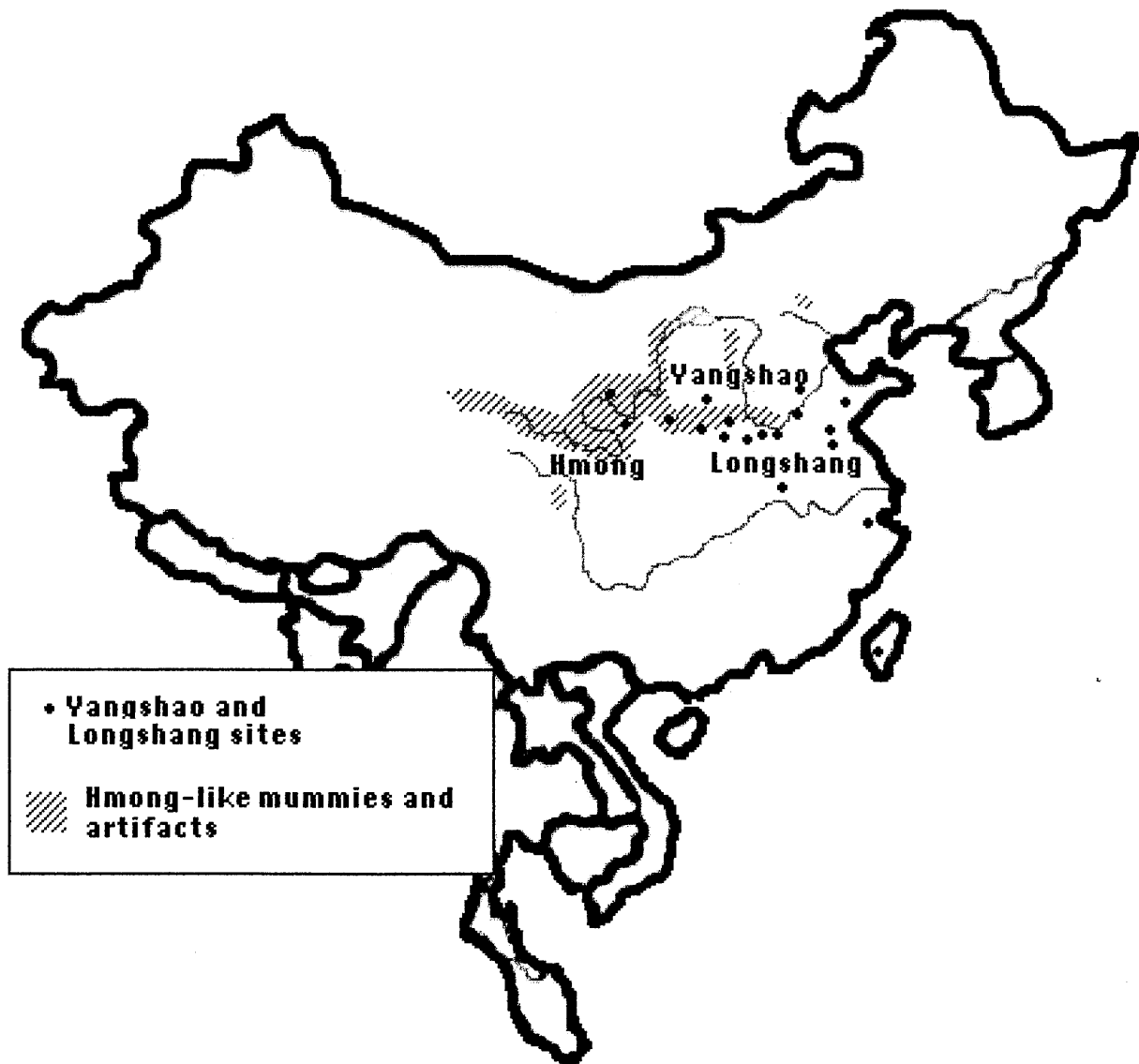
Linguistic Groups

From the CIA Demographic Maps, 1997

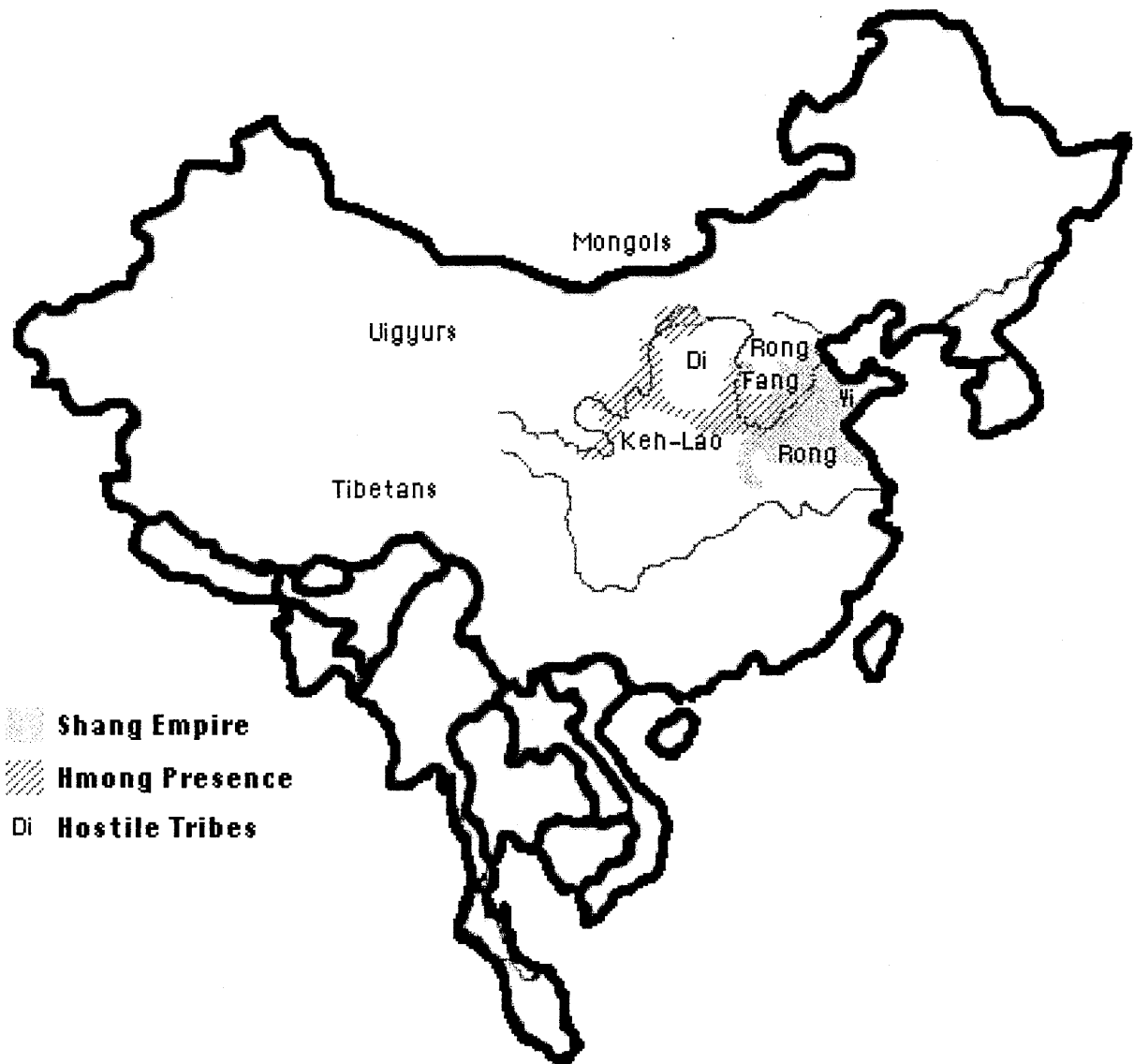
Current Miao-Yao (Hmong) dialects share traits with the Sino-Tibetan groups, and with the Austro-Asiatic groups, giving rise to controversy as to the 'root' of the Hmong language. The dialects have no commonality with the Altai groups.



EVIDENCE OF HMONG PRESENCE NEOLITHIC PERIOD

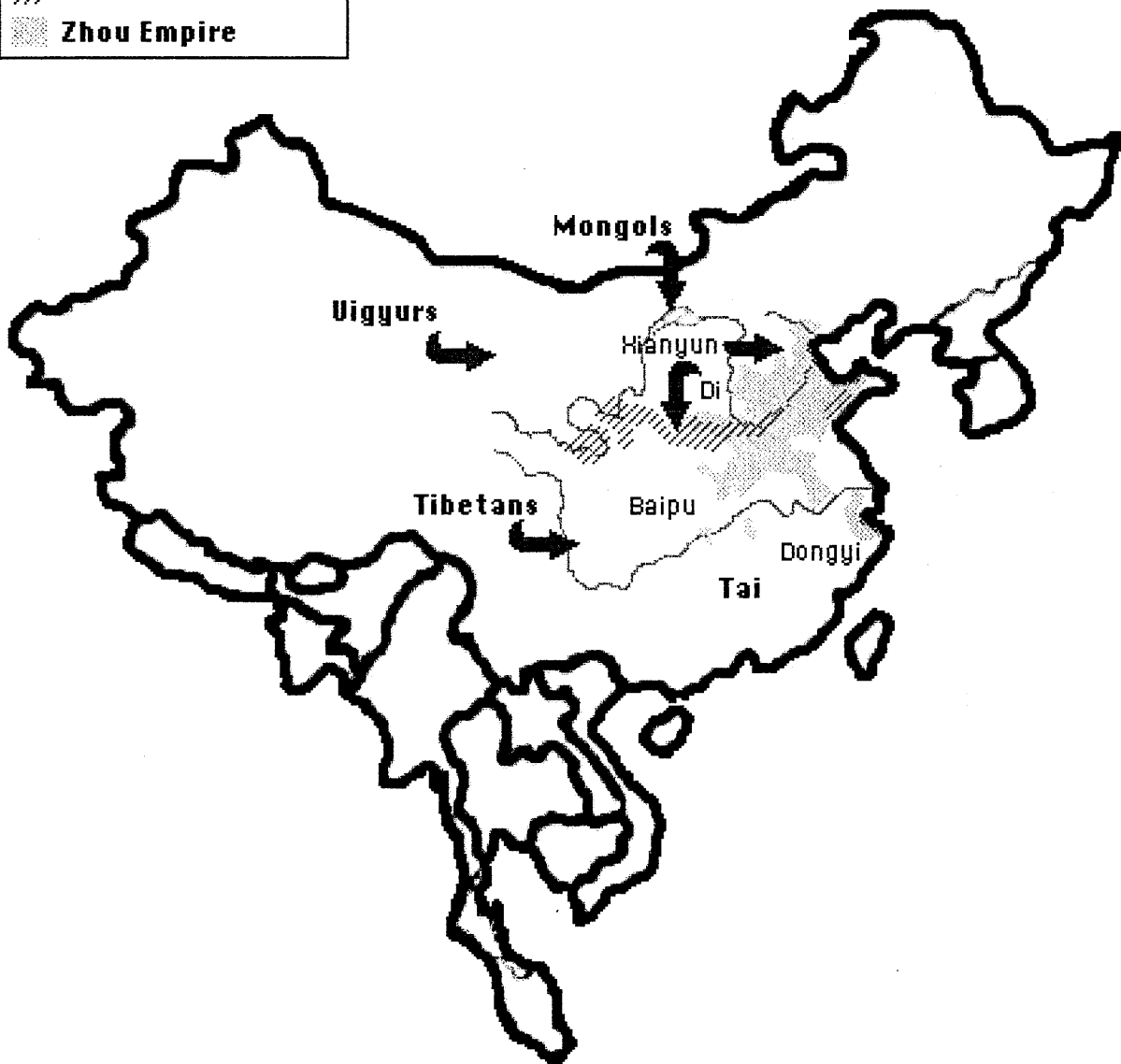
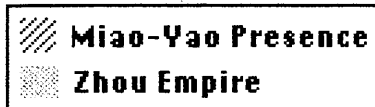


HMONG PRESENCE AT THE TIME OF THE SHANG EMPIRE CA. 1300 BCE

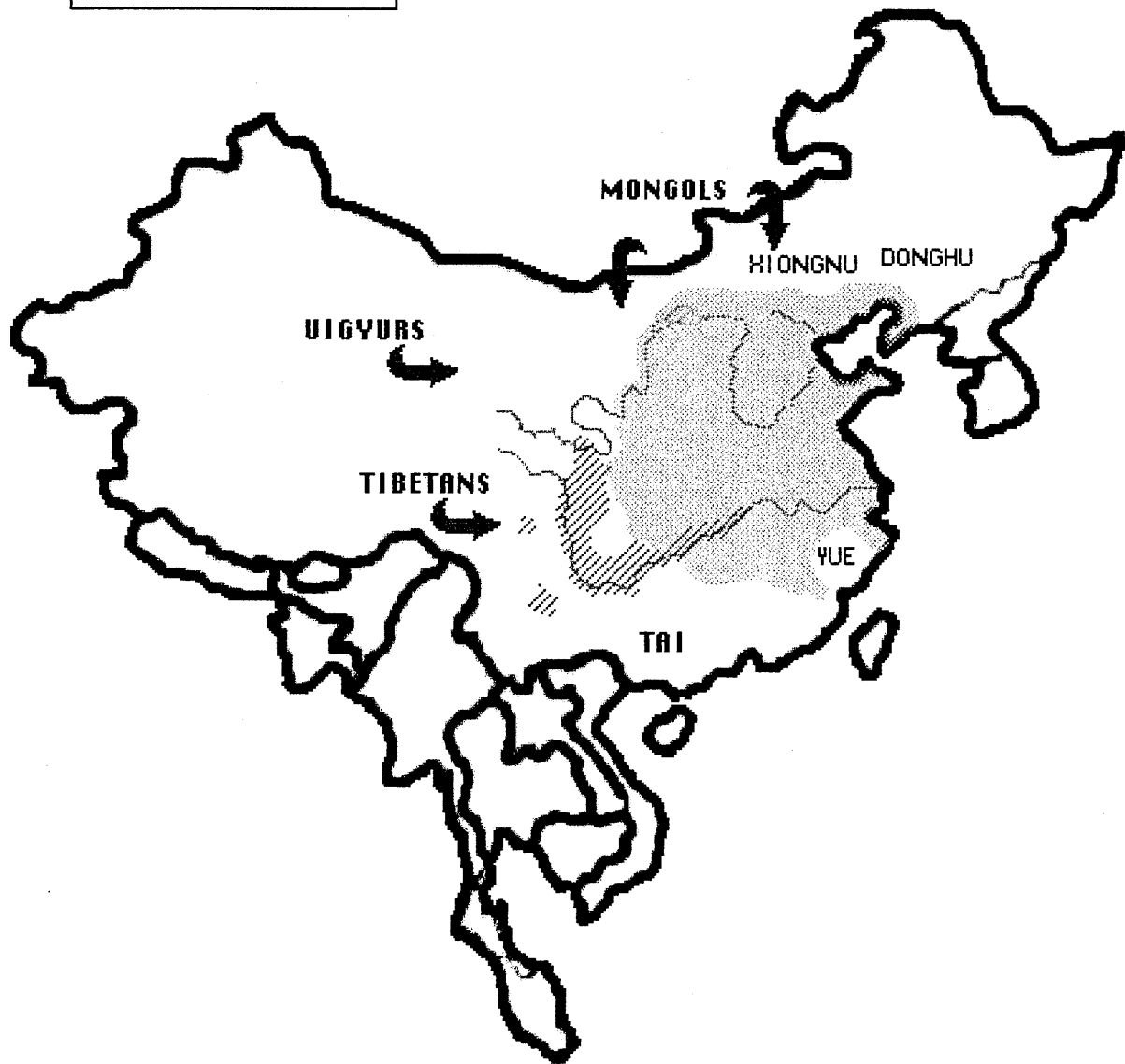


In this period, the term Miao (barbarian) is most often used to denote the peoples with Miao-Yao speech and customs. The Shang refer to hostile or barbaric Chinese tribes by name, and to Uigurs and Mongols as People of the Horse. These distinctions will help us track the presence of the Hmong (Miao-Yao) from this point on.

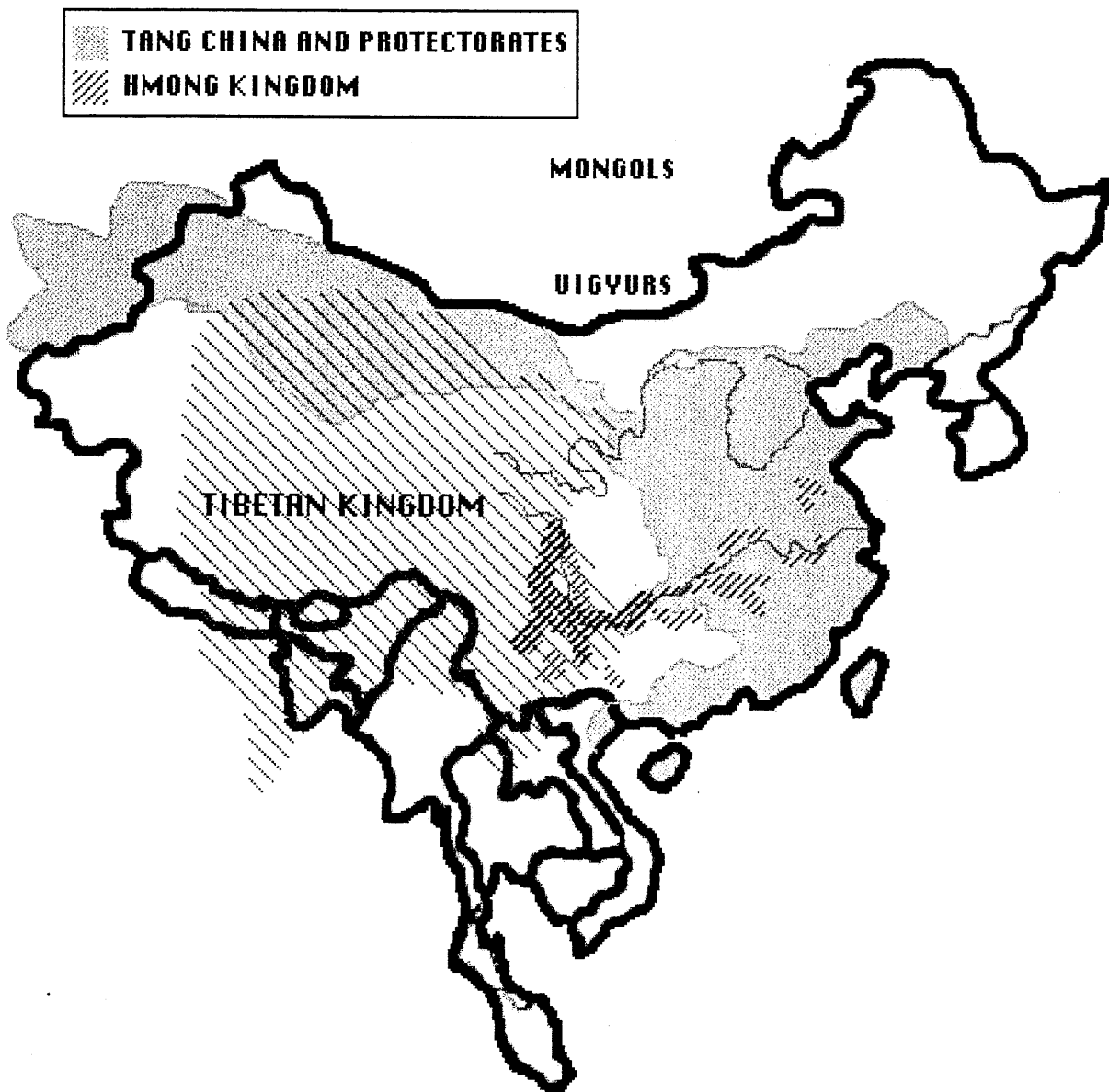
HMONG PRESENCE IN THE ZHOU EMPIRE, 1100-700 BCE



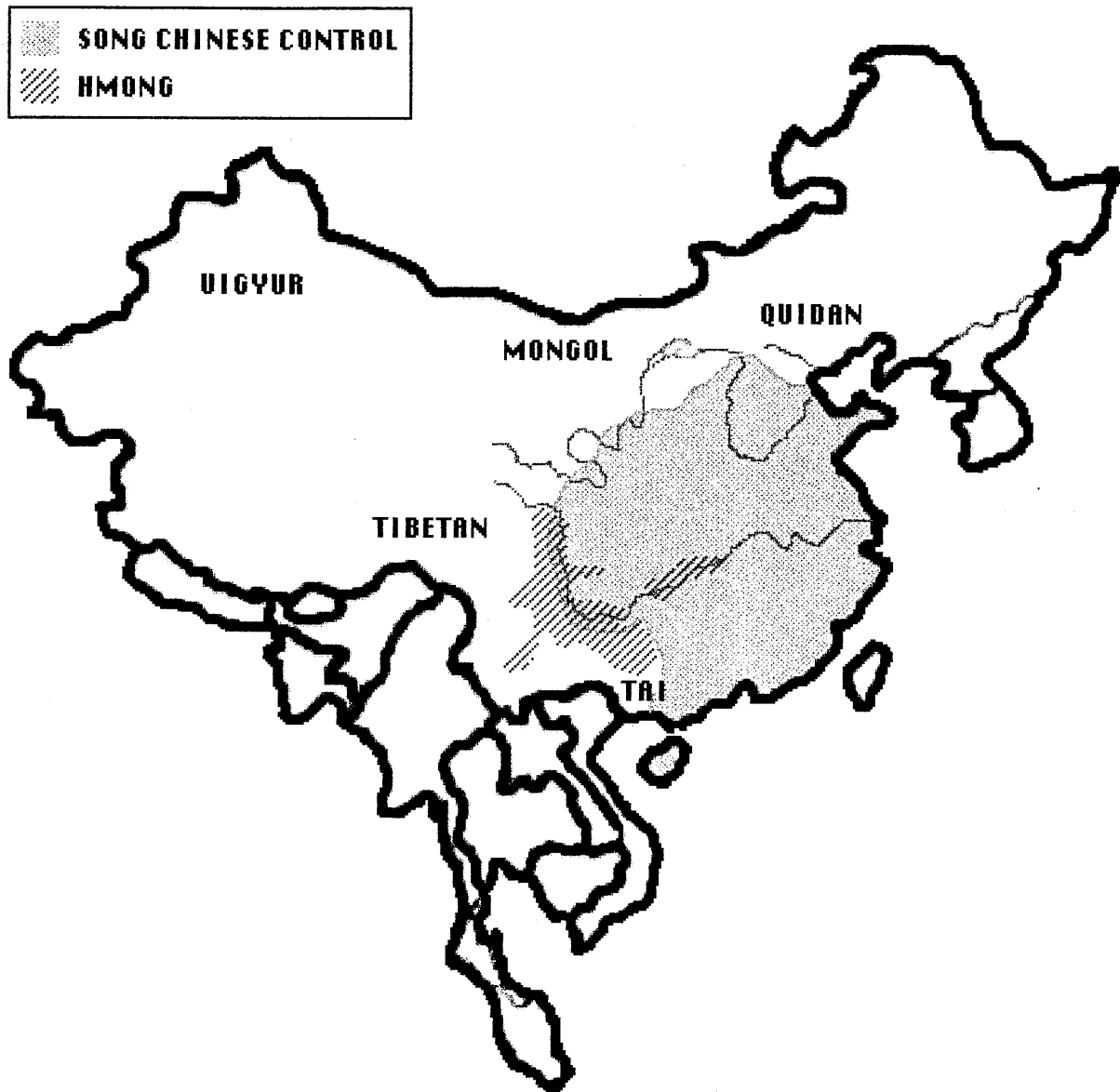
HMONG PRESENCE DURING THE HAN DYNASTY, CA. 100 BCE



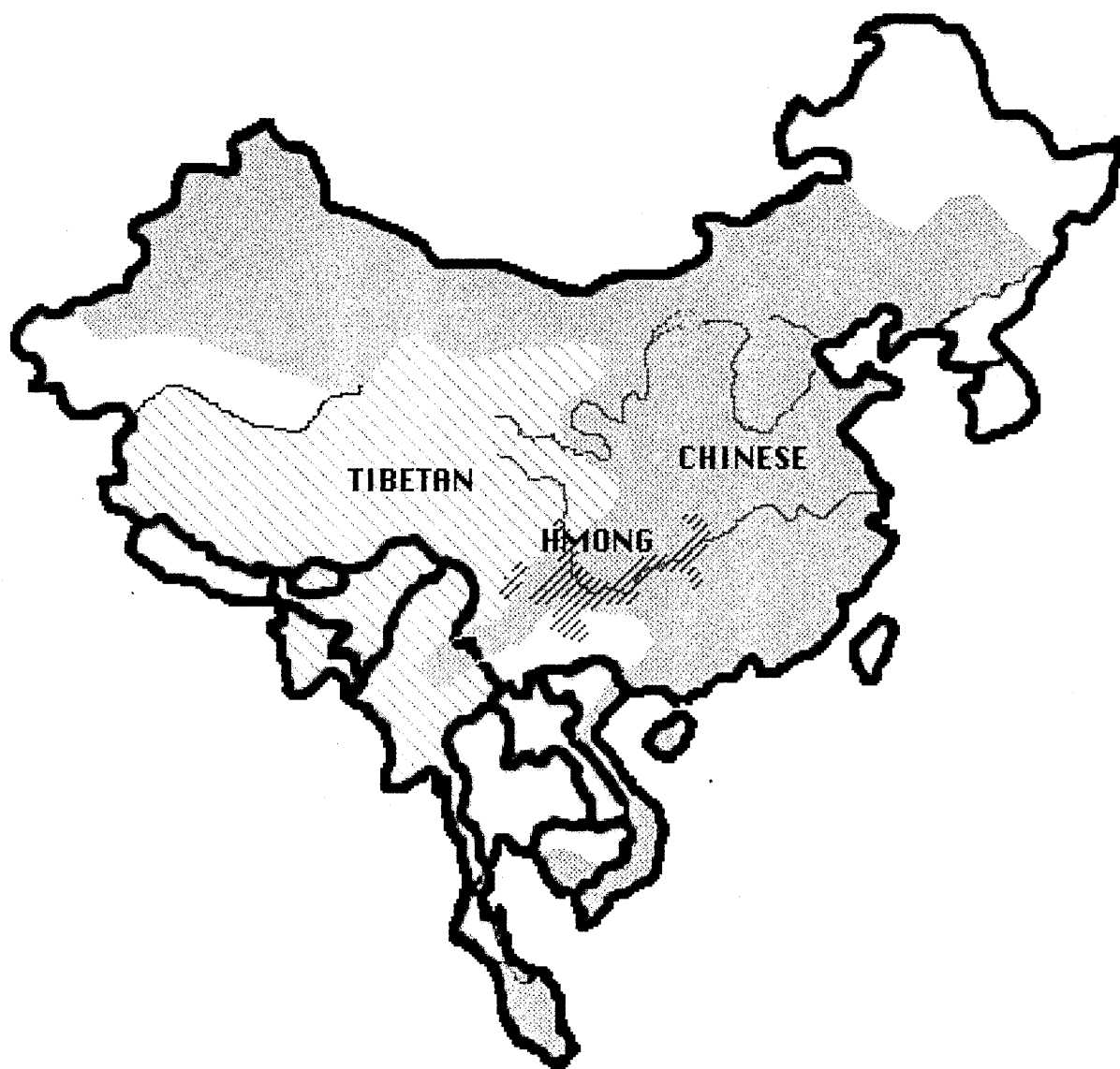
THE HMONG KINGDOM 47 BCE-615 CE DURING THE TANG DYNASTY



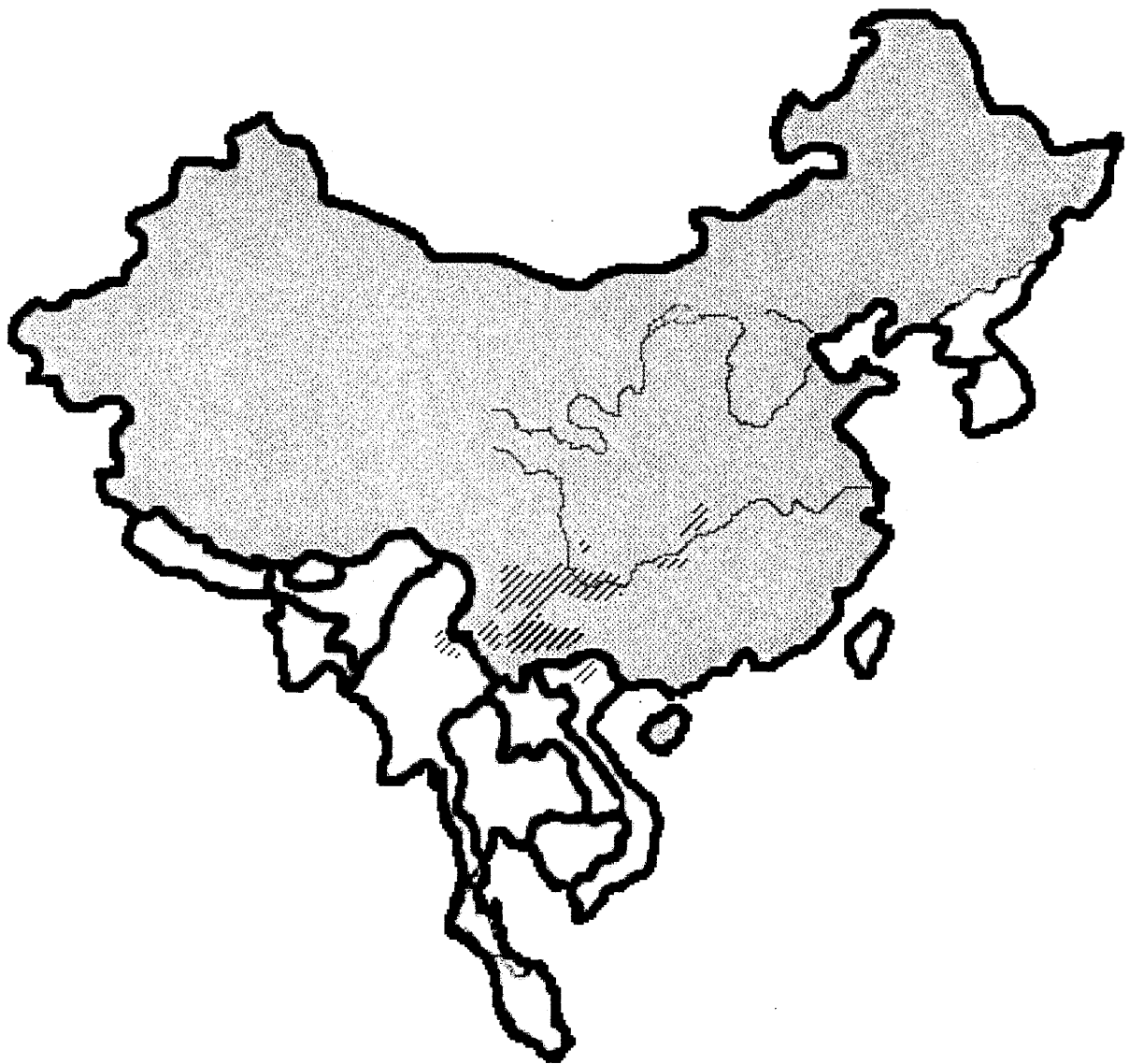
HMONG (MIAO-YAO) DURING THE SONG DYNASTY, CA. 1100 CE



HMONG DURING THE YUAN DYNASTY CA. 1368

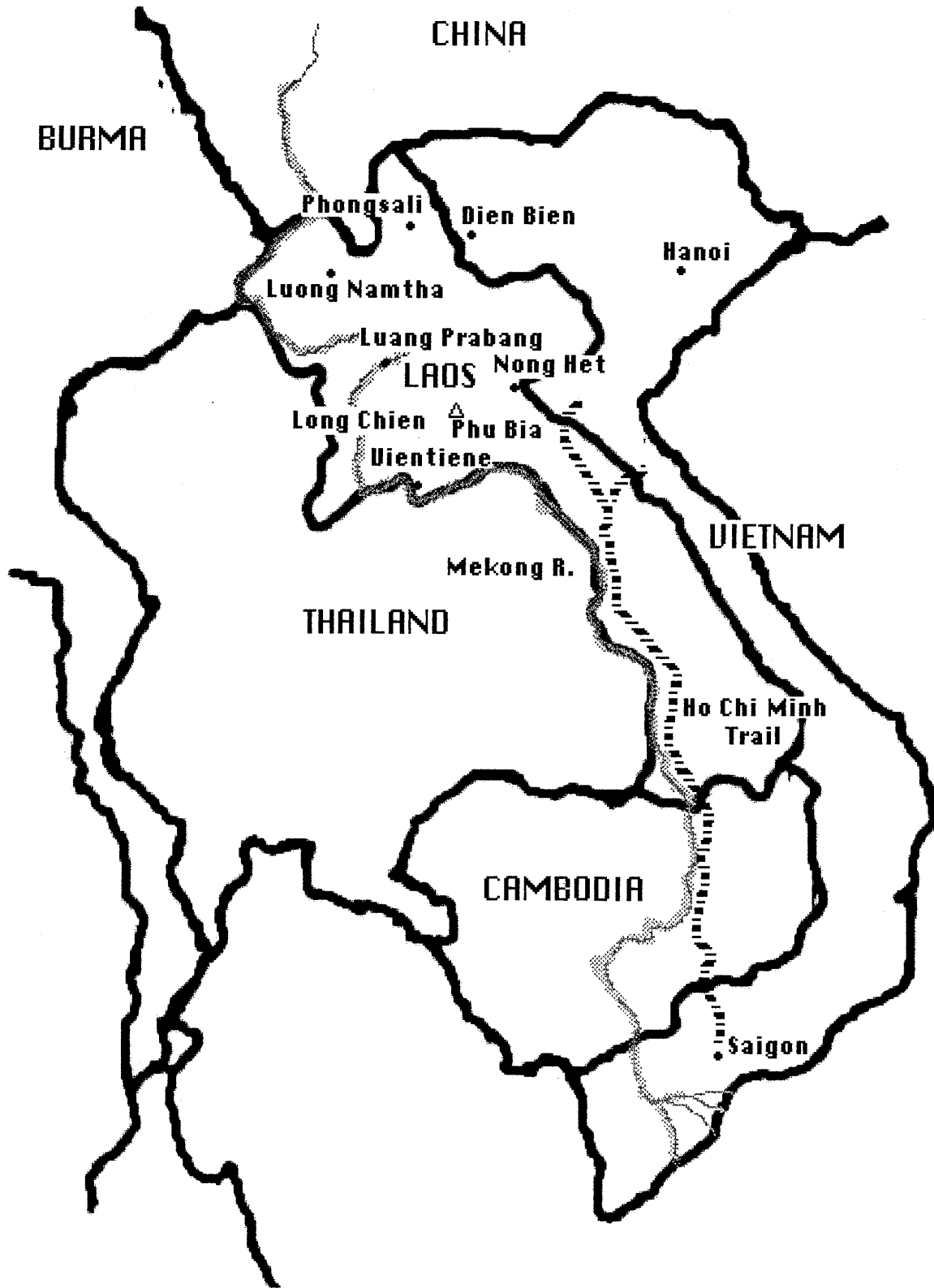


HMONG IN CHINA CA. 1816



Appendix C.9

SITES IN NORTHERN LAOS



Appendix C.11

APPENDIX D

HMONG ODYSSEY ORAL HISTORIES

The Communists were called Red Laotians. There were also some Red Hmong, but not many. We were told in the camps in Thailand that the Red Hmong were finally killed by the Vietnam soldiers and the Pathet Lao (Red Laotians). These took over Lao as soon as the Americans went home from Long Chieng, capturing the king of Lao, Sisavah Vatanah, and all the loyal figures. They even captured the Laotian villagers, telling them not to worry. The war was over, and nobody was fighting any more. So this made the villagers not worried about escaping the Red Laotians.

But in 1977 the king was put in prison and they turn the land around. They capture all the doctors and educated people, engineers, agriculture experts, and many others to be put in the education camps to change their minds to Communist thinking. If these people attempts to run or escape, they are put in death penalties. If sickness occur, they let the person suffer and not feed them and make them work very hard anyway until they are dead.

After this, the villagers move away as far as they can. Some cross the Mekong with bamboo rafts, some payed for boats at first. Some come back to show others the way and tell the villagers about the help of the United Nation in Thailand. This gets people moving in big crowds, fleeing for freedom.

So many people are moving to Thailand. They did not have enough food, and after several days in the jungle, they begin to eat wild berries and the plants. They eat banana, yam, and pava--a leaf you can eat.

Our parents built a raft of bamboos and cross the river at night time. The Thai took us into camps run by United Nation. But the Thai didn't want the Hmong in their country and gave us no land to farm. The US people interviewed many Hmong. And they gave people a T-number and an alien's card and put some of them on a plane to the US. The families had to work very hard in America to pay back the money for the plane ticket, to rent space to live in, and to buy food. Slowly, the hmong people are spread out across this giant country and even the world, and they begin to learn the different ways to live. They are building up and gain knowledge. The hmong people are walking up a long stairs one step at a time.

September 2, 1997, St. Paul, Minnesota

the smoke from their fires was and where the star-on-the-side-flying-beetles [Russian helicopters] were.

My husband never went with the rescuing men, and I was happy because almost all those men got killed. My husband was a very patient man even though he was so young. The Americans gave my husband a camera, and sometimes he was away very long. Other men came and gave him knew picture film, and he gave them the ones from his camera. He never told me where he went or what he saw. He never told anyone, and no one asked him. But my new father said that his son could see things other people could not, and when he walked in the forest, he made no sounds, and he could run silently for two days. I smiled because I thought he was trying to get me to love his son and be proud of him and not worry. But later I found out that everything my new father said about my husband was true. Sometimes we would wake up, and he was sleeping beside me and no one heard him come in.

At a later time, my oldest daughter was still sucking and was very beautiful. But she was very quiet, so I hoped that nothing was wrong with her. She wore a flower hat to trick the spirits and was very healthy and had a good appetite and a big smile but was very quiet. One day I was walking on the path from the fields where I was working with the other women and some old men. The other women went home to cook for the others, but I was not needed to cook because my husband was away and so was my new father, and my new mother didn't like the way I cooked. I stayed too long and was alone walking up the mountain. My daughter pulled my hair and looked very frightened but did not cry. Then I heard the shooting and shouting. Some women were screaming; and I heard the shouting in Tai language that the Vietminh use. I wanted to save my baby and ran from the path into the jungle. I went to a place with soft soil under the roots of a tree and took my hoe to dig a hole. I took leaf and things and crawled into the hole with my daughter and covered us. She was not crying, and I thought "she is shot by a bullet!" But she was alright; and she was just very quiet and held my hair. Then I knew why she was born so quiet. It was how the ancestors saved us.

The shooting stopped, but screaming and the Tai-talking did not. Even in the dark, I knew that the soldiers were staying there. I did not want to think what they were doing. I hoped that every one of my family got away and prayed to the ancestors and spirits to tell them to keep my husband and father away from the village. In the morning I knew they were burning the fields. They used the path close to me, and I wished I had run farther away. Then the soldiers went away. But I stayed with my quiet daughter all day in the hole. She sucked well; and I slept. Then it was raining, but the hole did not fill with water because the tree drank it up. Then I knew why I was led to that tree. The next morning, my daughter and I had very soiled clothing because we had shat in them instead of coming out of the hole.

It was still raining, and I carried my daughter up to the village. Steam was coming from the

houses that were burned. The rain put out the fire and made the steam on the hot wood. The water running down the path was pink, and I knew that the blood of the dead Hmong was washing my feet. But I went up to the village anyway. I don't know if my daughter can remember what she saw. I did not think then that I should put a cloth over her eyes. There were pieces of people, of pigs, of dogs all over. Even though it was raining, I could hear the flies. I looked at some of the heads I could find to see if my family was there. I found them all and put their heads by the door of where our house was. There was a woman my age tied between trees. I knew they had raped her and then cut her up; and some of her guts were hanging out from her groin. Then I began to cry because I knew she was not dead. I found a knife in one house close by and burned my hand when I picked it up. But I took it and cut the cords away from the woman's wrists and ankles. I layed her down and saw that some of her brains were showing from where her nose and forehead were broken in. But she was still breathing and choking now a little because I laid her down. Her skin was cold. I took some opium I had for stomach medicine--I took all of it and pushed it down her throat with my finger. They had cut her tongue out too. I waited in the rain and held her cold hand until she was dead. It wasn't until then that I knew she was my sister-in-law. I think her soul told me as it left her to travel back to the ancestors. I put her body with the heads I found of my family, and let the rain wash them. I took off my clothes and washed them too and cleaned my daughter. I found pava leaves and ate them away from the stink of the dead bodies and burning houses.

When my husband came home, all the bodies were gone. Two old men had got five children straight up the cliffs and into a cave they knew about. The old men could hardly walk, so they must have flown like birds. I never asked them. But they made funerals for the people the best they could. We were very hungry because the old men could not hunt any more. But some boys brought fruit, leaves, even some birds they had caught, and we ate them. We dug through the homes and found pots and things, so that when my husband and some other men came back, we were ready to travel to a new place.

I asked him, "Should we wait for your father, husband?" And he pointed to a high peak and didn't say anything. But I knew that my new father was up there with the uncle. With his one eye and his American looking-thing, the uncle had watched everything. The father was his brother. Two days after we found a new place to live, the father and the uncle showed up and built a house for us. The two old men helped me care for the children and did "old woman's work" because one of the men said, "My wife is still looking after me; she is in my hands."

My quiet daughter was starting to walk, and I was going to have another baby. My husband was very troubled, because he heard that all the Americans went home. His camera was empty, but he wouldn't throw it away. His brothers and sisters were gone; and his father got very sick and died. I know he was thinking about running away, because he talked to me about Thailand and how thousands

of Hmong were going there. Someone told us how the Red Lao were now the rulers. They were going from place to place and finding people who had helped the Americans. They were taking away the children and sending the men into prisons and education centers. The education centers were worse than the prisons.

But I knew what my husband was seeing. He had a one-eyed uncle who would spit in the face of the first communist who showed up; he had a pregnant wife, a baby girl, and two old men who had become part of our family. Some other people took the five children away with them because they were relatives. So I knew my husband wouldn't leave, and very soon he might be dead.

I was wrong, because my husband was very smart. I married him because he was very handsome and strong and everybody liked him. But now his good looks and strength would get him into trouble, and I wished he was old and ugly. My husband said one day that we were moving. And we did.

My husband had got a large Water Buffalo--a cow that had already borne two calves, and was as heavy as I was with her own baby. I told my husband that now he had two wives: the big one could plough better, but I was still prettier, and he didn't have to stand on a stump to make love. He named the cow "Wife number Two." My husband, I thought, should find some people with a field so we could help them plant and become part of their village. But my husband had a very good idea. For some food and a place to sleep, my husband and Wife Number Two plowed or thresh or haul water or move a house. After that, we would walk a few miles where we would help other people. But we always walked toward the Mekong, and not with big groups of Hmong. We fled to Thailand by inches!

We found some Communists one time with their truck broken down in the mud. I was frightened, but my husband put his hat on, pushing his ears down, pulled his trousers up too high, and put a very big smile on his face. He asked the Red Lao soldiers if he and Wife Number Two could help pull them out. This made the communists laugh. Our two old men sat down in the road. The one-eyed uncle was in the jungle--maybe they would know about a one-eyed man who used to watch them. My quiet daughter picked flowers. She always knew what to do.

After the truck was free, the soldiers gave us some food and told my husband that he could probably get work in the next village because they were building a bridge for the trucks.

My second daughter was born at the wrong time. One of the old men said, "Don't worry--my wife delivered many babies; and she is living in my hands!" He didn't know what I meant. My daughter's time had come as nature wanted it, but the communists were breaking up families--taking children away to be raised at communist schools. The uncle would always disappear into the jungle and find us again at night or when it was safe. Now he took my quiet daughter with him. She was safer than with me. The new baby was not a quiet one; and I wondered what all her noise would be good for. The answer was nothing. Or maybe it was to show the communists that we had nothing to hide. They

would not take the baby while she was sucking, I thought.

But as soon as I lost my big belly and my breasts were swollen with milk, the soldiers wanted to lie with me. I wondered if I would rather be dead, and my husband and daughter too. Then I thought, they would have me like they had my brother's sister or they would have me without a fight. Sometimes I would have to do this many times a day. My husband was ashamed, but I told him I was just losing one eye to rescue my family. We never told the uncle. One old man was so angry about it, he cried.

Then the uncle told us that he had seen some soldiers take older children and kill babies--especially baby girls.

We were at a village a day's walk from the river. There were a lot of soldiers; and my husband went to them with the camera and said he had found it and wanted to know what it was. An officer took it and gave my husband some Russian cigarettes. The officer showed my husband a map and taught him how to look at it. My husband pretended to learn with difficulty. Then my husband showed the officer a place where he knew Americans had been but which was not back along the way we had come. He didn't want the officer to think we were moving toward the river. My husband traded some people the cigarettes and some coins he had for opium. He got a plastic bag and some plastic reeds [tubing] from someone else and some . . . [Plastic tape].

My husband whispered very close to my ear that we were going to Thailand. But I had to be brave and patient and he loved me and his daughters. That night, he and the uncle gave a tiny bit of opium to my baby girl and, when she was sleeping, they put a plastic tube into her mouth and put tape around it and bee wax. They put wax over her nose and in her ears. My husband put my quiet daughter on his knees and hugged her. Then he told her that she had to take care of her little sister and to be a good girl. He and the uncle put a tube in her mouth and did the same things as with the baby. Then, they gave her the baby and told her to hold it. I was crying a little, but was trying to be brave for my daughters. My husband and the uncle had given some opium to Wife Number Two and made her sleepy. Now they took the calf out of her womb and skinned it. They put the two little girls into a plastic bag, sealed it, and sewed the calf-skin around it. The tubes were sticking out and they were breathing very quietly. The uncle had put some medicine plant into the womb so it didn't bleed; then he and my husband took fat and greased the calf, and put it back into its mother with my daughters inside. I didn't have to pretend any tears when the next day we had the funeral for my baby that was really a skinned calf. We buried it so that people could see; and I let my milk run through my blouse so it looked like I no longer had a baby to feed. My husband put me on Wife Number Two who was really Mother Number Two now. She had two tubes sticking out of her [canal], and was drunk. I will always thank her for the [indignity] she had to go through.

When we walked to the river, the uncle was somewhere else. I didn't look for him. The Old Men were gone too; and he probably took them with him. Around the middle of the day, we came to the river. It was very wide and very open. We went through some bushes, and my husband helped me down so I could feed the babies through the tubes. I could even tell which girl was on the end of the tubes. I had to squeeze my breast and let the milk flow down for my quiet daughter; but when the first drops of my milk got to my second daughter, the power of her sucking pulled my nipple into the tube. She was done quickly. My husband dropped a tiny bit of opium into the tube.

All afternoon, and especially in the evening, we heard gunfire and machine guns when the Red Lao found Hmong hiding in the bushes or trying to swim or make rafts. My husband and I made our way up and down the river, looking for things people threw away before they went into the river. Sometimes there were bodies that the birds and animals were eating. Sometimes we would see a family hiding but would not look at them. We saw some soldiers watching us; and my husband waved at them and asked them if they wanted to buy anything he had picked up before he took it back to the village. They told him he was crazy; and that they could have any of it for free. Then he did a little Lao dance for them; and they started to sing for him.

We did this for three days, and took the things back to someplace where we sold them to Lao people in the evening. So the soldiers knew who we were and sometimes even traded with us.

Just before the moon rose on the fourth day, we could see the gunfire down the river, and then the sound would come after that. Wife Number Two turned her head away from the river to go to a village. She still walked like a drunken woman. But my husband turned her head the other way.

Wife Number Two, the Second Mother of my children, waded quietly into the water she wanted to be in all day. She sighed. I swam next to her and sang her a song about rice planting. My husband lay over her back, holding the tubes out of the water.

That's how we got to Thailand. The rest was very easy. My youngest daughter could not grow hair for a very long time. She has never been as pretty as her quiet sister; and she has the temper of a Water Buffalo and is noisy and forceful. The first daughter did not let her family die in the jungles of Laos. The second daughter will guide her family in America. And they both have two birthdays.

We never saw the uncle after he left us in the village, but I always set a place for him at our table. A social worker told me that Jews do that too. I don't know about that. Maybe they also have a one-eyed uncle who would have given his other eye to have his family near him. He always showed up. Maybe he will again.

My husband is still a handsome man, still strong, and still very smart. I watch other women watching him, and I am proud of how the men listen to him. I asked him if he was sad because he could only have one wife in America. He said that the apartment would be too small for her here, he couldn't

feed her, and besides: as a man gets older, he doesn't like making love while standing on a stool.

August 20, 1997, St. Paul, Minnesota

My name is Yang Pha, my father's name was Kang. My mother was Ger Deng. I don't know where my village was in Laos, or even in Vietnam. I don't have anything from them except maybe the way I look. I used to think I would be walking to school and an old woman or man would stop me and say, "I knew your parents! Come in and eat with us, and I'll tell you all about them!" It still might happen.

Some people think that the third migration--the one that was around 1975--is when all the Hmong got out of Laos. There are still Hmong in Laos and also in Vietnam, and in China, and probably in other places. There are people travelling back to southeast Asia to meet with their families now that things have "cooled down." But there are still people dying there; and there is still no equality for the Hmong and for other mountain peoples. It's like saying, "After Little Big Horn, things have cooled down; and all the Indians are happy."

I left Laos in 1986. I don't know how old I really was, but I hadn't reached puberty yet, and the doctor (actually a dentist) said I was about ten. So, let's go back about three years. I would have been about seven. The stories of the wars weren't just stories for me. I had heard about Phu Bia and the Yellow Rain. There were men around with no legs. If you were a man and didn't have a bullet hole in you somewhere, you were a freak of nature. If you were a mother or aunt and didn't cry sometimes for no reason, there was something wrong with you.

Crops didn't grow like they used to. The ground was poisoned. People were sicker than they used to be. I heard all these things. I didn't hear any stories about a proud nation, or a race as old as the earth. The closest thing to paradise seemed to be to get across the mile-wide Mekong to freedom (whatever that was). "Freedom," they would say in a tired way, and point to the setting sun. I was seven. I played with my friends, I got drunk at a wedding once, I had four brothers and three sisters--all older than me. My father had gone to look for work, and I can't remember him.

And I watched everyone I knew in the whole wide world get killed. Killed. I have been looking for a word that says it better. You can be killed by a disease. Murdered? TV and movies make murder so clean and common that it's really no big deal. You can't describe what I saw. There is no word. My best friend Shoua--it only took about three seconds for the bullets to rip him apart, fill the air with a pink spray, and spatter what had been his body into pieces no bigger than a splinter. I carried a piece of Shoua with me for a couple of months. It was a piece of bone, I think, stuck under the skin on the side of my neck. It finally festered and fell out. I tried to find it but couldn't.

My seven-year-old mind could have gone many ways. A psychologist could give you the options. But I turned away before Shoua's anatomy had settled on the ground, found a big rice pot, and

crawled under it. When I got to Thailand, the UN doctor gave me a hearing aid. I'm sure I lost a lot of hearing with the bullets and shrapnel klanging that pot. I wondered why the soldiers didn't look under the pot. But after a while, I realized that there weren't any soldiers. I heard the whine and thudding sounds of the helicopters. They had seen our roofs and were now cleaning off our side of the mountain. Later I would learn that this is what the Communists called "pacifying a region." If you can accept the testimony of a seven-year-old carrying a big grudge, they were Soviet gunships. I'd seen them before; and I'd see them many times after.

When I flipped the pot over, I was surprised that it had been moved about twenty feet from where I got under it. I pulled my shirt up over my face to try to filter the air. The smoke stung my nose--something like a whiff of something in a highschool chemistry lab mixed with singed hair and burnt sugar. And I left. I never thought of burying anybody. I don't think there would be anything to bury anyway. I walked away under the cloud of smoke in the direction of "Freedom." I walked all day; and since a seven-year-old can't go eight minutes without a full meal, I got very dizzy.

I was following a little creek and came across some fruit and edible leaves. I was looking for people. I sat down and stared at the water and realized that I was Hmong and probably all the Hmong were dead. I cried, I think, until it was night. And I think now that I wasn't really scared, but lonely. Hmong don't make good hermits. I thought about things all night. I thought that maybe my mom was alive and was looking for me. But I really knew better. Then I thought, hey, I'm a kid--not a village. As long as I stay under the trees, there's plenty to eat, lots of water, and no helicopters.

I suppose a lot happened after that. But it's the kind of thing that happens one minute at a time. I got hungry so I ate. I saw some fish, and it took me days and days to figure out how to catch one. I didn't have a clue about making a fire, so I never made one. I explored a lot. I thought I saw a tiger once. I experimented with food, leaves, bugs, learned not to eat toads. I threw rocks at birds. It was very rare that I actually killed a bird, but they're too much work for too little meat. I preferred fish when I could get them. Snakes have a lot of meat too. Most of the time I lived on yams.

Nights were hard. I think, though, that if I had a clue of what I was looking at, I would have learned a lot about celestial navigation. It never occurred to me, though, to travel at night by the stars.

If it hadn't been for the loneliness, maybe I'd still be living in the jungle. I was too young to think that I couldn't just go on indefinitely. And I began to drift sort of toward the west, because I knew that that's where the Hmong went. I came across a village. Actually, I smelled it a long time before I could see it. And as the scent got stronger, I found out I was shaking. My teeth were clamped so tight that they hurt. I was braced and ready for the helicopters to hit.

This feeling was so strong, that I avoided the village, and avoided every other village, field and road from then on. I hated open spaces, and so I would walk even for days to get around something I

could have crossed in an hour. I had all the time in the world.

I lost some teeth and kept them in a little pouch I had made of some grass. Then I came across a very nice place. There was a cave just big enough to be my house, and it was all overgrown and invisible. I wouldn't have even found it myself except by accident. Down the slope about a quarter of a mile, a stream deepened into a small pool. It came to me that I needed to learn to swim.

More teeth came out, and more came in. I had worn out my shirt; and my pants were shortening up. I would never be large, but I was growing; and these clothes were the only measure of that that I had. No adventures followed. But one day I thought that I was strong enough to swim the Mekong River even though I had never seen it. I took my fish spear that I had made, a larger pouch I'd woven to put food in that I found, and walked west.

I suppose that I came to the river after many days. I had no due-date in my head. And I never thought how far it might be. It was like my life then--you just go along until something happens. The river was wide but not as wide as I thought it would be. I must have run into it farther north than the descriptions I remembered, because the current was very fast, and the land rocky. I had to find a better crossing. I walked north a number of days without seeing any real change. I'd get crushed in those rocks. I walked south again, passing where I had first come to the river. I kept walking south until I came to a place where the land levelled off for a short way and the river broadened out and took several routes before meeting back up. A number of short swims was better than a long one. I left my clothes on the near side and my pouches except for the one with my teeth in it. I tried to swim with my fish spear but soon let it float away.

So I was naked when I came onto a road. I walked in the trees away from the road until I saw a man walking a horse with a sack of something on it. Then I came out in the road and tried to talk to the man, but he didn't know what I was saying. I thought I had forgotten how to speak and listen, but he gave me something to eat which wasn't very good; and let me ride on top of the sack.

The Thailand police took me to a refugee camp where some people with my name took care of me. I was still very young, so it didn't take me long to adjust to the crowds and the new foods. The dentist said I was ten. I showed him my tooth collection, and he thought I had been in the jungle about three years. That's the only way I know, because, like I said, I had a kid's sense of time.

My new Family helped me learn English at the school, and then I went to America. That's my story.

July 22, 1997

Ling Ger, age 35, from somewhere near Nong Het
Her First Story (Second Story follows)
Translated and Transcribed from a voice recording by M. L.

My father left the Catholic Church because the priests were trying to get my brother Lin and me to give up wanting to get married and be part of the Church people. I was young and was very sad because I couldn't go to the school any more. My brother still went to the school because he told the priest he had already been with girls and liked it very much and was his father's oldest son and had duties to the ancestors. They gave up on him and didn't talk to him about it any more.

Later, there was fighting all around; and the school and church got bombed. The church people went away, but some teachers stayed. My father wanted to send my brother Lin away to some family where the war was not so close. But Lin was already a secret soldier and went away into the jungle to show the Royal Army where they could find the Pathet Lao. My father got a letter from him, and I read it to my father and mother. They cried because he was alive and they were happy, but he was going to Thailand to learn to fly airplanes.

My mother wanted me to get married so that I could go away to safety with my husband. But I wasn't even a woman yet. Things got very bad, and we had to get out of that place because the Vietminh were taking over. We went with a lot of other Hmong and even a lot of Lao and Khmu [?] people. Every time we got to a place we had to move again.

We came to a place and wanted to go up into the mountains to start making a village; but a man came and said the Army was all gone. Even Vang Pao who was a great Hmong fighter had gone away, and there was no fighting man left to protect us from the Vietminh and Pathet Lao. The men thought that we had to get out and go to Thailand. Then my father was thankful that my brother was already there. We started to walk, and we walked for about twenty days.

During the walking, old people died, and even some babies, because the mothers could not make enough milk. Our group was too big, and the soldiers found us one time and began shooting us. I got blood all over me from some people who were shot, so I laid down by the edge of the road. When the soldiers chased the people who went into the jungle, I got up and ran across the road. I was surprised that some others had the same idea. My little sister was not shot, but my mother was dead and my grandparents. Also some other members of the family. After three days walking in the jungle, my father came. He told us what happened to the other people. He went back to find my mother and us, and he did find my mother. She was dead, and he thought the Communists had taken his daughters away. So when he found us, he was very happy.

Without my mother, my father was a different man. All he wanted to do was save his girls, get us some food, get us to Thailand. He wasn't our father any more. He was a very good friend for us. Now we were hiding in the day and trying to walk quiet at night. We had to kill all the dogs and chickens and things because they made so much noise, and the dogs wanted to make friends with the soldiers. The mothers gave their babies opium to keep them quiet. My father buried some babies once because

their mothers gave them too much opium and they died. He showed my sister and me how to give only a little bit, how to use it for stomach ache, and things like that.

One time, we were walking at night and I was in front on the path with some friends. Some soldiers came out on the road and shouted at us in Lao language. That is the language we used at the school, so I answered him while all the other people went into the jungle very quiet. Three soldiers came up to us, and one of my friends started to cry. She was older than the rest of us. I said to the soldiers that she was sad that they caught us because she was going to go meet her lover and we were going to watch out for them. The soldiers laughed and asked me why I was wearing a Meo dress. I told him so that her parents and his parents would think it was just a bunch of dirty "Meo" fucking in the weeds. He told us to go home and burn those clothes because someone else would shoot us if they thought we were Meo. Then he told my friend to be a better Lao woman and not act like a whore. We turned around and walked back. I was so scared that I almost fell down when we got out of sight of the soldiers. I threw up in the grass, but my friends and people we were with said I was a hero and saved all their lives. I felt a little better but threw up again.

Then my father said he was glad I was at the Catholic school because they taught me how to lie very well and use bad words in Lao language!

There were only maybe fifteen people left when we came to the river. My father didn't like where we were. There were so many tire tracks, and the place had no trees for cover and nothing to make a boat with. Just some low bushes and grass. In the day, I took a water jar to carry to the river. I was wearing a Lao skirt now; and I was tall and slender then. I looked more Laotian than my friends. I thought if a soldier sees me, I will just take a bath and pretend I don't see them. But I got to the water, and no body was watching. I looked up and down the river while I filled my jar. The tire tracks were there because it was a very good place to go across. So I knew that if we went to the water, we would get shot. I knew that somebody was probably watching me too. So I washed my skirt and blouse and hung them up on sticks in the sun; and I took a bath in the river and squeezed the water out of my hair and sat on a rock for a long time. I put my clothes on and picked up my jar. When I turned around, I saw the shine from two pieces of glass--binoculars. The soldiers were only about a hundred feet from where my family and friends were hiding.

So I didn't pretend I didn't see the binoculars; and I shouted at them to stop watching me when I was naked. I even threw some rocks at the bushes. A man shouted back at me and said I wasn't worth his trouble, and for me to come back when I grew some breasts and had some hair between my legs. I told him I was telling my father--I didn't care who he was. Then I walked away to the road we were on the night before. I didn't go back to my friends. There was no shooting, and I went into the trees to wait.

Before night, a truck came with more soldiers. The daytime soldiers went away in the truck.

There were about five of them, but they had a lot of guns and we didn't have anything. In the dark, I went back where I left everybody, but they were gone. They didn't come past me, so they were going up the river. I moved very slowly in the bushes, but when I went a long way, I moved quicker. I never caught up with them.

The sun was rising at my back. On the other side was a Truck, and some soldiers were putting people in it. I saw my father handing my sister up into the truck. He never looked for me. He didn't want anybody to know somebody was on the Lao side. Pretty soon, some Red Lao soldiers came and watched the Thai soldiers. I just sat still in the grass. One time a body floated past me. It was one of the women who had been sick. She wasn't strong enough to swim.

Just after the sun went down, before the soldier's eyes got used to seeing at night, I heard the truck come to bring the night soldiers. Right then, I got into the water and went to Thailand.

August 15, 1997, Superior, Wisconsin

Ger Ling, age 35, from somewhere near Nong Het
Her Second Story
Translated and Transcribed from a voice recording by M. L.

I found my father again in Ban Vinai camp. He was living with other people of our family who got across. Everybody had stories, and I knew that our story was a very happy one in comparison. There were people with burns on them. Some didn't live long. But when I listened to more and more people, I knew that many people were dying who were trying to get to Thailand. They were dying because they had no leaders--nobody to tell them how to escape or where to go. They were like animals trying to get out of a burning field that was being cleared by farmers. I said this to some elders, but they looked past me because I was a child and a girl.

Before the new year celebrations, I knew I had been a hero because I was a child and a girl. Nobody took me seriously--especially soldiers with guns. I took some paper and wax crayon and maps at the English school. I traced Laos and Thailand, put down the camps, named the mountains and rivers and towns. Then I got some ointment from the nurse, and I greased the maps. I went to a friend, and she cut my hair like a Lao girl. Then I left the camp.

Going back to Laos is easier than getting out. The soldiers must not think anybody would like to visit their new country. But when I got back in, things were a lot different. At first, when we were leaving, everybody was going around like crazy. The war was over, but everybody was moving around. Now, people were being kept where they were. It was harder to get anybody out. The soldiers knew what to do better. So they stopped everybody. I didn't know what to do, so I walked across the roads trying to find some Hmong people going to the river. I got a big basket to carry. I didn't know anybody. I had no money for food. I just had my map and nowhere to go. I felt very stupid.

Then I started my first menstruation. I cried.

A few days later, some people were going to the river at night. They were trying to be quiet, but it was no good. Trucks came all around them, and they got taken away. Their dogs ran around in circles for a while. Some Lao people came and took things the people had dropped. But the dogs didn't leave, so I knew somebody was still there. In the morning, I walked over to the place and made a kissing sound. Two dogs ran out of the bushes, so that's where I went. There was a family of three people. Two women and a young boy. I sat down with them and told them that I had no food, but if they were strong enough, Thailand was very close. The young woman said she wouldn't go without her husband, so I asked the older woman and the boy if they wanted to stay too. They said yes. Then I told them that the people the soldiers took were all dead. I watched them get killed. It was a lie, but they believed me. I showed them my map; and they looked at it like it was written by Jesus.

The older woman and I choked the two dogs. Then we ate some of the meat. At night, we moved

to a place I had seen before. There was a little island in the middle of the river. They could start across, and rest if they were tired. I told them that when they got to the other side, just start walking, and somebody will find them. They ate some more of the dog meat. The older woman took some of the guts she saved, blew them up with air, and tied them. I had never seen that before, but it was a good idea. She gave one of the floats to the boy and one to the young woman. She took off her skirt and filled it up with sticks and things, then tied it. They told me where to go to find some of their family, and then they went into the water. I went away and didn't watch them. If the river took them, there was nothing I could do. If they made it, then good.

I made eight trips with people to the river. All they needed was somebody to show them what to do. Then they weren't blind and walking into a tiger trap. The men wouldn't listen until I showed them my map. There were always some young men. Some of them were fighters. Some of them I sent to look at the river and make rafts. Some of them I kept to teach the people how to hide and be quiet.

On the last trip, the rafts were going into the river when we heard trucks coming. They would be shot if they didn't swim, so everybody ran into the water. I had to go too. I went across with a family that was very strong, and we helped people on the other side. About half of the whole group died in the water. Some would have died anyway. I wanted to go up on the bank to dry my clothes, but I found out there was something wrong with my foot. Three of my toes were gone, and I was bleeding. The father of the family carried me to where he made a little fire. He heated his knife and burned my foot to stop the bleeding. That was when it started hurting.

A U. N. doctor fixed up my foot, and he also took a bullet out of the back of my leg. I didn't even know about that one! I told them that my family was at Ban Vinai, but they didn't believe me when I said I'd been there already.

I had no adventures after that. I was married in the camp, and my husband and I went to America and stayed in California. Then my husband's family had us come to Wisconsin. My father stayed in Thailand where he died. My sister died there of pneumonia before I left with my husband.

August 28, 1997, Madison, Wisconsin

I am called Yang Trong. In America I am Mr. Trong Yang. Now I am not working except in a garden that church friends let me use for free. I was a farmer when Laos was a good country. I killed some people when I was a young man, but that was in a war. This is my story about the war and leaving my homeland and coming to America, U. S. A.

I was born in a village in very high mountains. This was close to China, and my father and grandfather traded with some China Hmong people sometimes, but China government wanted us to stop. I never went in China but think I have some cousin in there. My father was also called Yang Trong, but he died before I was born. My mother was called Moua Dee. She is a very old woman in Thailand in Burma country.

Touby Ly Fong was a great man. The Japanese soldiers were our enemy when Touby helped Fackee people try to get our country back from these soldiers. Then, my grandfather used to go into China, and there were no Japanese where he went. My father died cutting down some trees. And after I was born, I was named for my father. I am his only child. I had some brothers and sisters because my mother was second wife to my uncle Vou.

Vou went with other men to the Fackee city on a long trip to make a deal for wood. But he came and told my grandfather that Touby Ly Fong wanted Hmong fighters to help him. "Why?" said my grandfather, because all the Japanese soldiers never came back. We heard a man say that, even though we never saw any Japanese soldiers ourselves. Men didn't want to go to the east and fight, because they needed to feed their families, and who were they fighting anyway? So our life didn't change much.

Later, I was married to a girl named Moua Bia who was a relative of my mother. That was when the Chinese got to be communist and stopped all people from trading with the Chinese and even the Hmong people in China and the others. I went with some men to a bigger town where the Fackee were to see if they wanted to buy the things the Chinese used to buy. But when we got there, nobody wanted to talk to us about lumber and opium and rice and things. They wanted to give us guns to go fight because the Chinese and some other people were killing people in Laos. I didn't know where Laos was, so a man told me it was my own country. This man said we could go fight the Chinese and they would pay us and help us send money to our families. So that's when I became a soldier.

It was very bad for the Fackee because they wanted to fight in the open ground. Then they got into a town, but that is like climbing into a pot if you're a chicken. They made no sense, and very many people died. Touby Ly Fong got some young men--not me--and got in behind the enemies. One man said the enemies were very scared, but then some tried to chase the Hmong who ran right up the mountain. The enemies couldn't run, so they quit and went back. So there was an officer with us; and he said don't

listen to the Fackee officers or you will be dead. Then we helped get the Fackee out of the town. I thought it was over--finished. But no. They said not to go home.

There was a Fackee lady--very tall--you could tell her what you wanted to say to your family, and she wrote it on a paper and said that she would get it to them even though they couldn't read it.

The Fackee took a lot of us and put us in a camp. We got hard hats and bullets and things. They want to give us shoes, but what for? Hmong feet are not Fackee feet. The guns were very heavy too. But boss soldiers told us how to fight and how to listen to the officers and not to argue about a thing, just do it. Things got very bad, and I went with the army to many places. I was with Hmong men and some Lao and some Kha. I went with them to the north of the Plain of Jars. Then we knew that the enemies were Vietminh--not Chinese. But the Vietminh had some Chinese with them and all the guns.

Sometimes they try to come through the mountains; sometimes through the jungle. They tried to get to Plain of Jars, but our big army pushed them off. Then all the way back to Vietnam. But where were the Fackee? Nobody knew that. We fought very hard, and some of us went into the enemy country and did some fighting. We got in the back of the army and killed the men in the trucks and workers at their cooking places. We came back for some more orders, and they said all the Fackee went to their homes. I thought again the war was over. I was wrong again.

The General was Vang Pao. This was a Hmong man in charge of the north army! But it was still very hard; and the Vietminh got very strong. Then some other white men came. Not Fackee this time but Americans. But America sent just a few. Hmong luck changed to good, but Trong luck ran out. I got shot; and my whole arm flew away. Then I ran back to the medics but passed out because the big veins were open in my shoulder. It was a long time before I got out of the hospital in Long Cheng. Then I wasn't a soldier any more. Maybe I ought to go back to my village, so I tried to get somebody to tell me where it was and I would walk there.

I was very weak, but had some money from the army and got some good food. Then I got a job at the gasoline place. Somebody got up in the mountains and made places for airplanes to land. But the gas for the planes was down here. So the gas trucks took barrels as far as they could, then they put the barrels on carts and pulled them with buffalo. Then they stopped the carts and piled up the barrels and Buffalo took one barrel on each side. I was with these people, because I didn't need an arm for my job. I was leading the buffalo! But then the mountain got so the buffalo was no good; and off came the barrels. We put ropes on them, and a two armed man climbed up with it. They had built a little place in the rock. They pulled barrels up to this place, then to one higher up, then to one higher than that. That's how it was done. But then a man said, "put some rocks on the end." Then the barrels went up by themselves! While the men were doing this, I took the animals back for more barrels. Then we went to another place and another. Then we took all empty barrels back. Then we started over again.

Sometimes I took some buffalo to pull trucks and things out of the mud. Sometimes I took them to put rocks across the roads. Then I would take them to "gas-up" the mountains.

Pretty soon I had another wife and some children in Long Chien. I told her that my first wife was in my village, and she said that if there was no war there, maybe we should go. But we never did, because I had a good job and didn't think I could be a good farmer with one arm. This lasted a long time, even until my oldest son got married and I was a grandfather.

But somebody in America got the idea that there would be no more war if there was no more soldiers. So they told the Americans to stop fighting. That was when the worst things happened. The Vietminh and the Lao Communists didn't stop fighting and they came all the way to Long Chien. They had so many bombs, that it never stopped. Some people went crazy. But I was a little deaf from being a soldier and it didn't bother me as much. A stupid Lao kid was helping with the gasoline and made himself a cigarette. He blew a big hole in the runway and killed eleven other men. The bombs got closer, and then the big airplanes came from Thailand to get the officers out. Other people got on the planes too. I got my family into a small plane because I was a wounded soldier. Then I went to get my son and his wife and new baby. They were gone.

After that, the communists came. They were killing people with uniforms, so I put on some other clothes, but someone told the Red Lao that I helped the Americans. I tried to lie, but they put me in a truck with some other men. They were taking us into the jungle, so I thought they would kill us. But they made us walk on the paths for the land-mines. Two men and one woman got blown up. But then we could see the mines because it rained, and we showed the soldiers just to look for the puddles. Then they took us to a place to build some buildings, but they didn't give us any food. At night, we got tied to some trees. In morning, we worked again. My jobs weren't so hard because I had one arm and the soldiers wanted the work to go fast. But I was very good with the animals, so they kept me and didn't shoot me.

We built three of these places, and put wire fence around them and they put people in them. At the last place, they took the strong men with them and I got left. It wasn't going to be good. I thought that I would just get weaker until I starved or got shot or got sick. So if I got out and got shot, it would be over fast. I got down and pushed the wire up with my feet, but even though my feet were hard as hoofs, the wire cut them pretty bad. Anyway, I got out and ran into the jungle. Nobody came after me. Maybe I was lucky after all.

I knew all the roads around there because of the gasoline work and building the camps. So I got out. But my feet gave me trouble until the scabs got thick. I walked under the trees, and didn't get cut with rocks. There were a lot of Hmong trying to get to the river. Then I thought, "How can I swim?" So I walked into the mountains. Some people gave me food, but mostly I just walked back up toward China. I stayed with a family for a while and helped them do some things. It was very peaceful after years of

war, and so I enjoyed the walking.

After a long time, I remembered where I was but some people had to tell me where my village was. I didn't think it could still be there, and I was right. It was just a wreck. I stayed around for two days but didn't see anybody. Then I walked to the smoke where a new field was being burnt. An old man remembered my family and thought I was dead. My family was living close by, so I went there. My mother was old and had only three teeth, and she cried because I lost my arm. My wife didn't speak to me because she had a new husband. I didn't want any trouble and told them I also had a new family who were safe in Thailand. I even said I was a grandfather. They wanted to go to Thailand too, so I told them I was going from the north because there were communists everywhere else. I had to tell everybody in the village the news from the south and how I fought in the war, but after two days, we left.

I get confused about the countries, but we got across the big river because somebody put a log bridge there. We went on the trading paths into this country that is either Thailand or Burma, because everybody was calling it one name or the other. My old wife's husband had some family there and that's where they stayed. My mother wanted to stay with them because they were her family even though they weren't her relatives. I stayed for a month and helped to build a place for them. I told some stories. Then I thought that I should find my other family.

After a long walk, some Thailand police found me, and I got a ride in a bus down to Bangkok. I didn't tell them about any Hmong in the north country. I never found my oldest son and his wife and my first grandchild. I try not to think about them and hope he was as lucky as me. My second wife and my other children were in a camp for soldier families. We got sent to California even though I wanted to go to Montana where Vang Pao was. But then, Vang Pao came to California, but by that time, my second son and his wife were going to Minnesota, and we went with them.

Now I'm here. My wife got sick and died. I moved with my son and other children to Duluth, then to Superior, and then to Madison. All my children are married now; and they live in Madison except for my daughter who lives in Superior with her husband. I have a room in my oldest son's house, and a room in my daughter's house. I go to one then the other. I like the Summer in Superior but the winter in Madison. My grandson wants to be a U.S. Soldier. I tell him he's crazy.

July 17, 1997, Superior, Wisconsin

TRANSITION

Before my family and I arrived here in the US, we had to battle through some great hardships for that chance. During the conflict with Vietnam, we Hmong were all scattering to Thailand. Hearing that the Vietnamese were out to kill whoever was Hmong because we had helped the Americans scared us all. Thailand then to us was the land of freedom and hope. Many Hmong families attempted and many were killed trying. The lucky few like my family was able to cross the Mekong river to Thailand. As we ran through the thick jungle, I happened to make some noise (three months old), fearing that the Vietnamese would hear us, my family forced opium into me. About a cup worth of opium went into me in which I became immediately unconscious. This act killed many kids, but was to save the rest of the family. (Luckily I'm still here). So from there the Hmong were put into camps. My family stayed in the camps for nearly five years until someone sponsored us to the US. During that time, my family elders were taught English and such related topics.

We were told stories about riding a huge metal bird to the land of Free. To our surprise we did see that metal bird. And this big metal bird did take us to the land of free. Our first stop in the US was at an airport in San Francisco to switch planes. From every single angle, we were astonished and surprised at this wondrous land. No other word but, "Could this be Heaven?" was on all of our minds. Then as we arrived to our true destination in the Twin Cities, our cousins anxiously awaits us. At this time of the year, it was December and our very first thoughts were, "What are all those white and fluffy things from the sky?" The first chance that my brothers and I had of these was that we went out and ate them. To our dismay, they were super cold and tasteless.

This change to America was no doubt a marvelous place, however, it brought us more battles and struggles to live through. With a huge lack of English skills, we were always dependent on some relative who know much more English. This put a tremendous pressure upon my father. No longer will my parents be farming as much as back in Laos, but to help the family adapt this very different change. Adapting to such things as driving, eating, TV (me and my siblings fell in love with it), phone, the fridge, the bathroom and so much more. I was scared of the bathroom and the phone the most, with thoughts that the toilet sucks in people and that cops will come if kids use the phone. All that my parents knew that was right for us was: Education and become a Doctor. So that was to be our goal until we (the children) learned of many other professions to choose from.

As the children became more Americanized, my parents seemed to never would change in those ways. We celebrated holidays ourselves (learning from school) and our parents would look at us weird, sometimes got interested, and sometimes prohibited us thinking that we were crazy. The way we

started behaving and talking got them angry. We learned that to want respect, you need to give/show respect. As their kids, we are suppose to obey everything they said and not talk back. That is still one conflict we still have. With all this, we are gradually learning better to balance and sometimes live between to different cultures and beliefs.

February 25, 1998, Duluth, Minnesota

THE LIST OF THINGS MY MOTHER LEARN

When we got to our apartment in America, it was like a palace in a story with fake grass on the floor and all walls white. We didn't touch anything. And our mom sent us outside to find wood that she put in the stove and burned. The fire trucks came and we thought we were going to go to prison! A nice fire lady showed mom how to use the stove and the oven. They were electric.

When the Social Worker from the Church came and asked if everything was alright, mom had us tell her that it took a long time for snow to melt in the pails for our water, and our well was dry. The lady say, "What well?" and we show her the toilet. Then the lady show us how to use the toilet. I think she was afraid to ask where we was going to the bathroom! (Outside)

Some nice people took my mom and dad to the store and showed them what foods there were. My mom was terrified. And only meat she would get was chicken. They got some lard in a big plastic pail for stirfry. The next month, my dad went to the store and looked for more lard and brought it home. Then my mother made stirfry and it was awful and gunky. We couldn't waste, so we was eating this for many days and it began to stink. My dad had brought home vanilla icecream!

A car won't go if you put water in the gas hole.

My mother calls American quick rice "Ghost Rat Droppings."

The police will come if you kill a pig in the parking lot.

Americans keep dogs for pets, not for eating garbage.

The police will come if you try to plant yams in the boulevard.

Americans don't eat birds, squirrels, moles, gophers, rabbits, grasshoppers, snails, snakes, slugs, flowers, tree buds, iris bulbs, cats, or anything else not in the store.

Sanitary napkins are not for the table when Presbyterian ladies come for tea.

Dang Thao [not his real name], 57, born in Viet-Nam
Translated and Transcribed by D. Y.

I tell you right away, right now, I was Red Hmong. You want go? Go. You pretty girl; and I know you come through the Lao same as me. You got your family all kill? Same as me. You eat off ground; hide like frighten monkey? Yes! Same as me. Because why? Because you and me, we Hmong. Other peoples are Red or Red-White-Blue or it doesn't matter. They treat Hmong all the same.

I am born in the time of the Japan soldiers. Very bad time. Wait. My whole life very bad time. I living the best time now. Except American elders are thinking I am not a Red Hmong. America is heaven, but not for the Red. Japan peoples make war on the whole world. The Fackee men got into the prisons. The Japan peoples take everything, but not kill all the village. Why? They need us work like horses and cows. I too young fight Japan soldiers, I remember that time only for the bombs and the flag with the sun and being hungry. I remember when the Fackee came back my father move us to high mountain where they say I was born. Many Vietnam people also come to mountain because of the Fackee soldiers. One army go; one come. So some men are saying to kill the Fackee and make our home for just us. Chinese people are there too, but they can't talk Chinese because they are in the Vietnam very long time.

I was working one time with my brothers and cousins. A man came--a teacher. But very different than Catholic teachers. Catholic teachers teach the writing and the Christian things. Catholic say writing things make good farmers, better people, more smart. New teacher, he say "no." Writing make a lazy farmer. Smart won't make food grow. He say town people like the Catholic way because they don't work. They just take what the farmer has and pay him not much. Then they make taxes on the farmer to buy a house or some clothes because they can't do it. They read book. They drink. They eat too much. They lie with everybody wife and daughters. So, we thought this teacher was very good. "How we stop them?" He say, "Go to the towns and throw them out and make them work for what they get!" Good idea.

Many Hmong went into the camps to learn to be Red soldiers. We learn about fighting and guns sometimes. Most times, we learn Red ways. All teaching in Vietnamese, so some Hmong and other mountain peoples learn just a little. Some China soldiers are there to help with guns and things. Then, we go to some village, but we have to kill the Fackee peoples and some of the elders working for the Fackee. Then all the people free; and teachers help them learn Red way.

How many season this happen? Many. But then we start to free Hmong peoples in Vietnam and the Lao. The Plain of Jars is very big battle for maybe five years. The Hmong--my own peoples--fight us hard. In the villages and in the jungles, when we find the Hmong, the Vietminh kill them, rape and kill women and girls, cut up the bodies, steal the food. Many Red Hmong get very mad at this. Why no teachers? Why no help for starving Hmong? One man say theses thing to officer and gets shot.

I not going to tell you some things. Very bad. Very bad. You know them. Your parent tell you.

The Americans start going away. The Red soldiers go far to the south. Hmong stay in the north. We think, "So! We now free people. We now get land -- everyone! We now pay no taxes to Fackee." This is a lie we told ourselves. The Vietnamese send the Chinese back to China. The Red Fackee [Russians] come with food and new guns and things. Red Hmong told to go home and be farmers; but first give back all guns. My home was not in Laos, but they say all Meo are Laos people. We meet some other men who are with Pathet Lao; and they give us food, uniform, a rifle. We work in the north to interpret Hmong talk, look for peoples that helped Americans, build camps, and these things. But no land. No food. No peace for this time.

When they say "Kill the Hmong boys and girls," I say, "Okay." I take them out to the jungle in a truck. I shoot the Lao officer and two soldier. There were three Red Hmong. We burn our clothings, and take the guns. We help the Hmong children get away.

We went across the river down close to Vientienne. Some people died; but we killed some Lao soldier and some Vietnam soldier too.

Then? Then my story same as everybody.

APPENDIX E

HMONG ODYSSEY PLAYSRIPT

HMONG ODYSSEY
A JOURNEY OF 5,000 YEARS

An Historical Play in Four Acts
by Jon M. Berry

For Post 6, Indianhead Council, Boy Scouts of America
St. Paul, Minnesota

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HMONG ODYSSEY

PART I

THE ANCIENT PLACE

[A QENG PLAYER performs. After a little while, Enter HMONG MEN, WOMEN, and CHILDREN carrying packs with head straps. THEY circle the QENG PLAYER on a stylized journey. PAO helps NZEU lift her pack, as SHAO comes forward.]

SHAO. This is the music of the Qeng. What do you hear?

NZEU. Clear water pours into a wooden trough.

PAO. Sometimes laughter.

NZEU. Sometimes crying.

PAO. My father's spirit travels back to live with the ancestors.

NZEU. The voices of our children, yet unborn, coming to live with us.

SHAO. This is the music of the Qeng; and we Hmong have followed its sound since before anyone can remember.

NZEU. Even you, Shao?

SHAO. Even I. It is the music of our spiritual home: from where the soul comes when we're born, and where it returns when we die. But it is also the music of the ancestral home--of a place and a time when we Hmong lived in a distant land. Where was it? Some say it was beside a large Siberian lake, when days and nights were six months long, when the lake and all its rivers froze in the long night, and when the people wore the furs of animals to keep themselves warm. Some say it was in the fertile river valleys north of Xinjiang. We had travelled there so long ago that no one can know. Perhaps we were there since the dawn of time. We Hmong are among the most ancient peoples of the planet. But there came a time: long, long before the Romans built an aqueduct, long before the Greeks built a ship, long before the people of Egypt laid the first stones of the Pyramids of Giza--there came a time when we were pushed out of the ancient place by a fierce people who came to settle there.

[Enter TWO HORSEMEN who ride through the people, scattering them.]

They were people of the horse: swift and powerful. And we were small in number. Nzeu put her hand on her husband's and asked :

NZEU. Where are we going, Pao?

PAO. I don't know, Nzeu--

SHAO. --Pao told his wife.

Slide Pair 1

Slide Pair 2

Slide Pair 3

Slide Pair 4

HMONG ODYSSEY I:2

NZEU. Will we be rich enough for you to marry a second wife to help me with the work?

PAO. I don't know.

SHAO. Pao looked to the south.

PAO. Come, Nzeu. We'll follow the others.

[PAO and NZEU join the others circling the QENG PLAYER, as SHAO takes up her small bag of belongings. She eventually sits and takes up some needlework.]

SHAO. Whether we fled in a hurry or drifted away, we don't know. We left the ancient place to find another where we could live. But the ancient place never left us. It travelled south with us into a place called Xinjiang. It lived with us in the sound of the Qeng, in the sound of our language, in our ways and our souls. And soon, it filled the plains of Xinjiang.

[HMONG MEN, WOMEN, and CHILDREN stop the journey and arrange their homes.]

SHAO. For two thousand years--for 100 generations--we Hmong prospered there.

[The QENG PLAYER exits the stage. Enter TCHE-YOU.]

TCHE-YOU AND THE EMPEROR U-WANG

[NZEU arranges her home as some WOMEN help. SHAO continues to work quietly.]

NZEU. This is the story of Tche-you and the Chinese Emperor U-wang.

PAO. He is my cousin.

SHAO. How can the emperor be your cousin when you are Hmong and he is Chinese?

PAO. Tche-you is my cousin. We are very close.

NZEU. Then why does he never visit us, Pao?

PAO. He is an important man and lives in Beijing.

NZEU. When the Hmong had lived in Xinjiang a hundred generations, there lived in Beijing a Chinese Emperor named U-Wang.

[Enter U-WANG with attendants.]

PAO. He was not my cousin.

NZEU. U-wang's ancestors had lived peaceably enough with the Hmong and other tribes in the North. There were sometimes disagreements--

PAO. Sometimes big fights--

NZEU. -- but interaction between the Chinese and the Hmong increased through the years and flourished; and the Chinese emperors were aided by

Slide Pair 5

Slide Pair 6

HMONG ODYSSEY 1:3

ministers from many non-Chinese tribes. U-Wang himself had among his trusted ministers a Hmong man the Chinese called Tche-you.

PAO. My cousin.

NZEU. Tche-you was a wise and learned man--

PAO. It runs in the family. You can see the resemblance.

NZEU. But Tche-you grew increasingly frustrated by U-Wang's treatment of the Hmong. For you see: U-wang thought that all the lands in which his empire traded should be his, and that all the people of these lands should pay him tribute for dwelling on his land.

PAO. I've complained to Tche-you about the taxes myself.

NZEU. And then, U-wang got even bigger ideas.

U-WANG. But Xinjiang is empty, Tche-you. I will divide it among my sons.

NZEU. --Said the emperor. Tche-you answered very carefully; for it is unwise to anger an emperor:

TCHE-YOU. Empty, Imperial Majesty? What of the Hmong, my people?

U-WANG. You mean the Miao, Tche-you?

TCHE-YOU. Miao?

U-WANG. Weeds. Miao are weeds. We will pull the weeds, and plant Chinese flowers in the imperial garden of Xinjiang.

NZEU. And so Tche-you made up his mind.

PAO. He should have made up his fist like this, and smacked that U-wang right in the nose. Smack! For calling us weeds!

NZEU. But he made up his mind instead, and hurried to his people. It was in the dead of night; and all the people were sleeping.

Slide Pair 7

[TCHE-YOU "travels" as NZEU and PAO lie down to sleep.]

TCHE-YOU. [Stamping to make noise.] Wake up, inside.

NZEU. Pao, wake up. There is someone outside.

PAO. Me? What if its a tiger and he eats me? Then you will be a poor widow, Nzeu. You go see.

Slide Pair 8

[NZEU pushes PAO to the door.]

PAO. Who is it? Why do you come in the dead of night? Are you a tiger? Or a robber?

TCHE-YOU. I am not a Tiger or a robber, cousin Pao.

PAO. He says he is not a tiger or a robber, Nzeu; and he calls me "cousin Pao." Should I let him in?

NZEU. Do you have any cousins who are tigers?

PAO. I don't think so; but I'm not so sure about robbers.

NZUE [going to the door]. If you are not a tiger or a robber, who are you and why can't you wait until morning?

TCHE-YOU. Nzeu! I am Tche-You, your husband's kinsman. I come from the court of U-Wang. Open your door.

PAO. Tche-you! He's an important man, Nzeu. Where have you put my clean shirt?

Slide Pair 9

HMONG ODYSSEY 1:4

NZEU. Forget your shirt, Pao. Open the door.

PAO. Come in, come in, Tche-you. Nzeu, give Tche-you something to eat.
TCHE-YOU. Thank you. I must go soon. But take the word to all the Hmong
headsmen, Pao. And tell them they are to meet me here at the New Year
festival. All of them must come.

[TCHE-YOU exits the "house" and meets the HMONG who enter the stage
led by PAO.]

NZEU. And so all the headsmen came; and Tche-you organized the Hmong into a
great army.

[TCHE-YOU hands PAO a pot for cooking.]

PAO. He made me a General.

NZEU. A General in charge of cooking soup for the army?

PAO. Very good soup. Soup only a General could make.

NZEU. When we were ready, Tche-you led us against U-wang's imperial
soldiers.

[TCHE-YOU and HMONG MEN and WOMEN dance a stylized fight against U-
WANG and CHINESE SOLDIERS. PAO dances among the HMONG with his
soup pot--making sure everyone is fed and strong.]

In those days, men and women fought together. Led by Tche-you,

PAO. And sustained by my soup--

NZEU. --we defeated U-wang in the plains of Xinjiang.

[The fighting stops, and the CHINESE retreat to another part of the stage.]

NZEU. We pursued him, and met his main forces in his own homeland. We
beat the Chinese back behind the walls of Beijing. And then, we pushed them
out of the city.

[Exit U-wang and the CHINESE.]

PAO. What a fight! Smack! I'll bet U-wang's nose is bloody now.

NZEU. And so, Tche-you led us into Beijing. But we did not want the City or
the Chinese land.

PAO. I did. But nobody listened.

NZEU. We did not think of making a Hmong empire--

PAO. I told them, "Tche-you would make a great emperor; and as his favorite
cousin, I'll be a trusted minister."

NZEU. Minister of Soup? We returned to our homes.

PAO. After a few nights in the big palace. What a place! The floors were so
smooth and shiny, our goats could hardly stand up!

NZEU. U-Wang and his successors left the Hmong alone for a long time--

Slide Pair 10

Slide Pair 11

HMONG ODYSSEY I:5

PAO. But they still called us weeds--Miao. It made it hard for us to be good neighbors.

Slide Pair 12

FARMING ON THE YELLOW RIVER

[CHILDREN play a game, as MEN AND WOMEN mime working. PAO and NZEU join them. The QENG PLAYER returns.]

SHAO. [Rising] Generations came and went. The Qeng played; and we Hmong grew large in number. We spread slowly out from Xinjiang: stretching into new lands through Hopei and Shantung provinces down to the bend of the Yellow River in upper Honan.

Slide Pair 13

[ENTER some YANGSHAO who interact in mime with the HMONG. SHAO shares a bow of respect. PAO appears to be trading with ONE YANGSHAO for a pig.]

SHAO. On the fertile banks of the river, we came upon the Yangshao Chinese with whom we would share the land for hundreds of years. The Yangshao were good neighbors to us, and we showed each other how to farm many new kinds of plants, how to bring water from the river to the fields, and how to build houses from reeds and wood supported by a central sacred pillar.

PAO. And they introduced us to pigs from the south.

[PAO runs to the house and shows the pig to NZEU.]

PAO. It's a pig, Nzeu. A very special animal.

NZEU. Special? How much will it carry for us? It's legs are very short.

PAO. The Yangshao don't make it carry anything. That's how special it is.

NZEU. Not carry anything? Then what kind of wool does it have? It looks nearly naked.

PAO. It has some stiff bristles.

NZEU. Stiff bristles! Then what does it eat; and how much?

PAO. It eats anything; and it eats a lot.

NZEU. So it doesn't carry anything, won't keep us warm, and eats a lot? Give it back to the Yangshao; and tell them I already have a husband.

SHAO. Much of what the Yangshao taught us, we still use to this day. And once we cooked and tasted the pig, and once we found out how strong her hide was, and how many piglets she would bear, we didn't mind so much that she didn't carry anything. In turn, the Yangshao learned to use our cattle, horses, and goats.

[ENTER some LUNGSHAN.]

SHAO. [Bowing in respect] Slowly, the Lungshan Chinese came up the river, bringing wetland rice with them from the east and south. They and the Yangshao became one people, and they taught us how to plant and harvest the

HMONG ODYSSEY I:6

paddy and to prepare the rice for eating. The years on the river were good; and the land was very rich.

[SHAO begins to show some CHILDREN how to beat the rice.]

The Old Year gave way to the New Year and the planting of the rice crop. We did not wander with the herds but made villages and tended fields.

500 YEARS UNDER THE YOKE OF THE SHANG

[*War drums sound. And a GROUP OF SHANG WARRIORS rushes in.*]

PAO. But suddenly: The Shang Chinese swept up the valley of the Yellow River! They counted in the tens of thousands, overwhelming our neighbors the Lungshan until the Lungshan disappeared.

[*PAO is forced into a yoke like an ox while NZEU is held by her hair.*]

NZEU. Tied to our homes and our land, we Hmong were quickly subdued by the warriors of the Shang. And the Shang made peasants out of us--forcing us to farm our crops and tend our animals for Shang lords who now claimed the land as their own.

[*HMONG MEN AND WOMEN work slowly under the glare of the SHANG.*]

SHANG GOVERNOR. The lesson of U-Wang is not wasted on the Shang. Take these Miao--

PAO. We are Hmong, not weeds!

SHANG. Hmong? What is that?

PAO. If you let me out of this yoke, I'll teach you what a Hmong is!

NZEU. Pao! Tsst!

SHANG. Divide these Miao--these slaves--into groups of eight families. These will be just large enough to work the Shang fields, but too small to mount a rebellion.

PAO. For five-hundred years we toiled under the Shang.

NZEU. And the Shang spread all through northern and central China.

PAO. Wherever the Shang went, we went with them as their slaves.

NZEU. So the Hmong spread throughout the empire. As workers, we learned to make cloth--

PAO. To mine metals.

NZEU. To forge iron, copper, brass, and silver, and to make them into tools and jewelry.

PAO. To make furniture and chariots. To make all the implements of war for our "masters."

NZEU. We farmed, and tended animals, and fished. We looked after Shang children, kept their homes clean. And after five hundred years of slavery, we had become excellent craftsmen.

Slide Pair 14

Slide Pair 15

HMONG ODYSSEY I:7

PAO. [Whispering.] But an even more important thing happened to us. Our little, eight-family working groups may have been too small to be a nuisance to the Shang, but they were just the right size to create a democracy-- NZEU. --Where every Hmong had a voice.

[PAO meets another man.]

PAO. And when a headman from one group would meet another in the markets, they shared their voices and their ideas.

NZEU. So we Hmong remained Hmong and found a way to govern ourselves even under the yoke of the Shang. Even over five hundred years.

PAO. We were a hidden empire of slaves inside an empire of rulers.

WU-CHOU AND HIS HMONG ARMY

PAO. This is the story of Wu-Chou and his Hmong Army.

[Enter WU-CHOU and some Chinese attendants. SHAO serves them with drinks and fruit.]

PAO. The Chou Chinese chafed under the rule of the Shang. They were powerful lords, but not powerful enough to overthrow the Shang. But as the court of the Shang Emperors became softer and more refined, the Chou waited for the time when they could strike. One day, a young Chou lord named Wu-chou got an idea.

WU-CHOU. [Pointing at PAO.] Take off that Miao's yoke.

[The ATTENDANTS seem confused.]

WU-CHOU. I said take it off.

[The yoke is taken from PAO's shoulders, and he stands straight.]

PAO. You mean I am free?

WU-CHOU. Would you like to be free?

PAO. More than anything.

WU-CHOU. But you have always been freer than the Chou.

PAO. How can that be, since I am a slave and you are a rich lord?

WU-CHOU. You Miao--

PAO. Hmong.

WU-CHOU. Very well. You Hmong can come and go in the imperial city when I must wait to be summoned. You may travel with your masters, but it is your masters who are watched by Shang soldiers. Do you find the Chou wherever you travel? No. But wherever a Chou travels, there are the Hmong. And tell me, Hmong: how is it that when a thing happens in Beijing, it may take months for me to get official word; [pointing to SHAO] yet my Hmong servants have been talking about the event almost since the moment it

Slide Pair 16

HMONG ODYSSEY 1:8

happened?

NZEU. Wu-chou wanted to topple the Shang. So did we. So in the Chou lands, the yokes fell from our shoulders very quietly. We were made into soldiers. Then, young Wu-chou sent his soldier servants throughout the Shang empire. An unseen Hmong army spread to every corner; and when the day to fight came, we were ready.

[War drums beat.]

SHAO. The Chou rebellion erupted from everywhere at once. In the mines and markets, shops, villages, fields, and the homes of the Shang themselves. But it wasn't an easy fight. For forty years, the Hmong and the Chou fought elbow to elbow. For forty years, the lands of the Shang shrank, and the soldiers of the Shang became fewer. In the end, we Hmong once again occupied the imperial palace in Beijing, pushing the Shang from the city. Our friend and liberator Wu-Chou was now the emperor. There were great celebrations! And once again, we wished only to return to our homes.

[PAO, with sword and crossbow, stands before WU-CHOU, now dressed as an Emperor.]

WU-CHOU. To return to your homes? Is that the only reward you ask for?

PAO. It is what we have fought for. To return home as free people now that --

WU-CHOU. And where is this "home" you would return to?

PAO. To our fields and villages; to--

WU-CHOU. What fields and villages are those? The ones you tended for the Shang? The ones that now belong to the Chou? Should I cede you all the property of your former masters, Miao?

PAO. Hmong.

WU-CHOU. Hmong. You were spread across the empire by an accident of fortune. What am I to do with you now? Give you the whole empire, since you fill it? Banish you and lose the workers for my fields? Or slip the yoke of slavery back on you? If only you were Chinese. I would make you lords in the empire.

PAO. We can't be Chinese; and we will not accept the yoke.

SHAO. Wu-chou knew that this was true; and he was frightened. He had fought shoulder to shoulder with the Hmong for much of his life; and he did not want to fight them head to head.

WU-CHOU. I will extend my empire to the south. Take your Hmong warriors into the mountains of southern Kansu. There you will meet a wild race of barbarians--the Keh Lao. If you can take this land for me and hold it, it will be yours to govern.

PAO. So our Hmong fighters went south into Kansu. For the first time, they went into the mountains. The Keh Lao fled south; and our fighters made themselves a home.

NZEU. But as others began to follow them, Wu-chou sent his soldiers to stop us. He needed peasants to farm, fish, and build for the Chou; and the yoke of

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HMONG ODYSSEY 1:9

slavery once more descended on the necks of us who remained.

PAO. We who had gone first into the mountains were forbidden to return--barred by a wall of Chou soldiers, our former allies. We slipped higher into the mountains and farther away--beyond the control of the Chou. We were free. But--

NZEU. Wu-chou and his sons gathered us who remained into the fertile center of the empire; and it seemed as if life would return to the way it had been under the Shang. We organized a revolt, but the Chou had taken away our warriors and boxed us in a small place. He sent General Fang-chou against us with 300,000 troops and 3,000 chariots. Our main fighting force was slaughtered in the field. We were devastated and helpless. Then Wu-chou ordered Fang-chou to begin eradication of all the "Miao" in his empire.

[FANG-CHOU and his men dance among the remaining HMONG.]

NZEU. We fled in terror: North, south, east, west! We fled to the plains and to the sea--to the hills--to the rivers. Thousands upon thousands died. Small, beaten groups made it to safety where they hid and became part of other peoples. Some Hmong broke through to the coast--the Shrimp Hmong they are called, because they fish the shrimp. But most of us tried to break through to the mountains to rejoin our fighters.

[NZEU and others try to break through the CHOU SOLDIERS. NZEU and most of the others fall dead.]

PAO. Some made it through to us. Shao! Shao! Have you seen Nzeu, my wife?

[The Qeng player returns and plays. The dead HMONG and NZEU dance with HIM; and travel out through the audience.]

SHAO. And when we at last came into the mountain villages, the Qeng played for tens of thousands of dead Hmong and for a homeland lost a second time. The Qeng reminded us, and led us; and the ancient place travelled south with us into the high peaks of Sechwan and Kweichow.

[The HMONG "travel.]

SHAO. It lived with us in the sound of the Qeng, in the sound of our language, in our ways and our souls. And soon, it filled the mountains.

[The GROUP of HMONG grows larger. The Qeng Player dances and travels out through the audience.]

SHAO. For another one thousand years--while Saul and David and Solomon ruled Israel, while Athens flourished and Rome rose to ascendancy in the west, while Cleopatra floated the Nile and Emperors Augustus and Nero lived and died, and Christianity was born in Galilee--we Hmong prospered in the

Slide Pair19

Slide Pair 20

HMONG ODYSSEY I:10

cradle of these mountains. Outside, and seemingly so far away, the Ch'in replaced the Chou, but did not enter the mountains. Over time, the Han replaced the Ch'in, pushed the Tonkinese south until they were controlled in what is now Northern Vietnam, expanded south, but did not enter the mountains. We were left to be Hmong: a free people.

Slide Pair 21

PART II

THE HMONG KINGDOM

[MUSIC introduces the next section, as VILLAGERS pantomime/dance an industrious scene. SHAO plays a game with small CHILDREN. In the foreground, SHUE enters the stage, and is followed by an out-of-breath CHINESE TRADER. ZONG sees them, and moves quickly to Shue.]

TRADER. Wait, Shue. Wait. I need to catch my breath. How can you Miao live up here?

ZONG. Please call us "Hmong!"

SHUE. This is my wife Zong.

ZONG. Long ago, the "Miao" were your slaves; but you are now standing in the middle of the Hmong Kingdom. Show some respect.

TRADER. Aren't you going to tell her to be quiet?

SHUE. [Shrugging] I agree with her.

TRADER. [Looking around,] Hmong Kingdom? This high in these mountains there's no place to build a city! No space wide enough for a road! How can you have a Kingdom?

ZONG. Tell me: When you Chinese traders come to the mountains, what do you see?

TRADER. We see mountains! And ten thousand scattered villages, impossible to get to. And a hundred thousand scattered families lost in the rocks and ravines, clinging like goats to the craggy surface. It's work enough to get from one place to another. I don't see how you have the strength to actually farm anything. Hmong Kingdom! Ha!

ZONG. Look again, while you catch your breath. Where you want to see a city, look for a people. Where you want to see a road, look for a path--a way of life. If you had eyes, you'd see that each of the hundred thousand scattered families has a voice in the government of their ten thousand scattered villages, and that each village has elected a headman like my husband Shue. Don't you see that the ten thousand villages belong to a thousand districts, and that each district has elected a headman? Don't you see that the thousand districts belong to a hundred Hmong states, and that each state has elected a kaitong or "lesser king"? And Don't you see that the hundred states belong to a nation: the Hmong Kingdom, with an elected Kai or King? Look again, and you will see that we have laws that keep order and dispenses justice. You will see that the Hmong Kingdom is a people that makes their great and small decisions together. But maybe it's a good thing that all you can see is mountains. Otherwise, your Han emperor might take too much notice of us. Now go do your trading, but show some respect for where you are.

[SHUE leads the CHINESE TRADER among the HMONG on stage as SHAO

comes forward.]

SHAO. Not until we had greatly expanded and were stretching into fertile areas of Hunan did the Han Emperor take notice of the Hmong Kingdom. He sent his great General Liu-shang to press us back into the mountains.

[LIU-SHANG, dressed as a General in a Chinese Opera (with flags on his shoulders) marches toward the HMONG. CHINESE TRADER hides and watches, while he bargains with SHUE.]

SHAO. General Liu-shang moved his army up the Yangtze river into the foothills of Hunan, and was never heard from again.

[LIU-SHANG is surrounded by HMONG who take his flags. CHILDREN play with the flags as LIU-SHANG leaves the stage and comes back as MA-YUAN with more flags.]

SHAO. General Ma-yuan followed with twice the troops, travelled the Yangtze, and vanished.

[MA-YUAN is surrounded by HMONG who take his flags. CHILDREN play with the flags as MA-YUAN leaves the stage and comes back as TOU-CHANG with even more flags and several SOLDIERS.]

SHAO. General Tou-chang was more careful and cunning. He split his army into small bands who made their way into our territory not to engage our soldiers but to burn our crops and villages.

[TOU-CHANG, his SOLDIERS, and the HMONG dance a stylized pursuit in which the HMONG repeatedly build and disassemble a village just before TOU-CHANG and his SOLDIERS attack.]

SHAO. He used this tactic for three years, but we adapted, abandoning fields only to plant new ones elsewhere; moving entire villages out of harm's way. General Tou-chang went home.

[TOU-CHANG throws down his flags, and HE and his SOLDIERS leave. HMONG CHILDREN play a game with the flags.]

SHAO. To this day, we Hmong can move a village in very little time.

[The TRADER emerges from his hiding place and is loaded with goods by the HMONG, while he pays SHUE in silver.]

TRADER. You and your Hmong Kingdom control all of Kweichow and Hunan, most of Sechwan (when the Tibetans aren't marauding); and you're even over in Hupeh these days. You're opening markets in Honan, Shensi, and

HMONG ODYSSEY II:13

Anhwei. I remember when you didn't ask so much in silver, Shue. You'll force me out of business! How can I afford this? I'll go broke!

ZONG. Don't let him get away with that, Shue. Every time he comes back, he has better clothes.

TRADER. Well, the truth is: I can never have too much needlework, woodcraft, or silver jewelry to take back into China. The real money, though, is in the opium. The best poppies will only grow up here. I can take all you can give me.

[The TRADER begins to exit under his large load. SHAO crosses to ZONG.]

SHUE. See you again!

TRADER. You need roads. I could get a decent sized caravan up here with a road or two.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

ZONG. But it wasn't just Hmong needlework, woodcraft, or silver jewelry that the Chinese needed; was it, Old Shoa?

[SHUE crosses back and joins VILLAGERS.]

SHOA. No. It was something even more valuable to them than the opium. The Tibetans in the west and the Mongols in the north were coming over the borders. The Han needed money, food, clothing, and men for their army. The Hmong Kingdom gave them all these things and became their greatest ally. Many of us were appointed ministers in high positions. Our soldiers fought for the Empire on every frontier. While we had land and wealth, and while the Han needed us as friends, we were treated as equals in the Empire. And Shue, like all of us, looked out over the Hmong Kingdom, and was very proud. With our help, the Han held onto their dynasty for another century.

ZONG. Then Li-Yuan established the T'ang Dynasty, kicked the Hmong ministers out, and sent the Hmong soldiers home. He attacked our territory, saying it was now Chinese land!

[Enter CHINESE TRADER and SOLDIER, who try to barter with SHUE.]

SHAO. For another three hundred years, the Chinese bought all the opium and trade-goods they could, but harrassed us with their armies.

ZONG. [Agitated and pacing.] Now let me see. You want to buy opium, lumber, and metalwork from my husband at a fair price.

TRADER. That is correct. We want what is fair, so let Shue set the price. So, Shue--

ZONG. But then, you want him to give you back the silver you pay him?

SOLDIER. As a tax--for our kindness in allowing you to live in our empire.

ZONG. Your Empire?!

SHUE. ZONG! Tsst!

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HMONG ODYSSEY II:14

ZONG. [Trying to stay calm] And if he doesn't pay this tax?

SOLDIER. We will first burn this village to the ground, then take the silver he owes us.

ZONG. Burn the village? So, it would be much better for all of us if Shue didn't sell anything to you! Shue's done talking to you! Go away! See, you've made him very angry.

[SHUE begins to leave, followed by the TRADER and SOLDIER.]

TRADER. Not sell? Be reasonable, Shue. You Hmong are our friends.

SOLDIER. If you will not sell to us, we will first take everything you own, then burn your village to the ground.

TRADER. What do you say, Shue? Do we have a deal? Set any price you like.

SHOA. What did Zong see when she looked past the mountains into China? Did she see that the Chinese had become as numerous as the stars? Did she see that the Silk Road took trade goods back and forth from Asia to Europe? Did she see that the world was shrinking for her people and that the days of the Hmong Kingdom were coming to an end? What did you see, Zong?

ZONG. I saw a world I could not understand. We kept the Chinese from burning us out and thought that they would respect our fierceness. And when Ma Yin rebelled against his own Emperor and took Hunan Province, and when we joined with the Emperor to defeat Ma Yin, we thought we had earned the Emperor's respect. But he only used our fighters to absorb Ma Yin's arrows. I saw the Sung Chinese come into power. And when they sent their army to the foot of the mountains, I saw Tchu Kyou Toua Hang, our Kai, lead us into battle. I saw the Sung defeated, and thought that they should finally respect us for our victory. For a moment, I thought it was true, because the Sung accepted our King's daughter as a bride for the Emperor's son--uniting the Hmong to the Sung forever. We held a feast. We dressed her for her wedding.

SHOA. But they took her to Beijing.

ZONG. Where she died in prison.

[Drums begin far away.]

SHOA. What did you see, Zong?

ZONG. I looked out on the banks of the Yangtze below. The Sung had returned with their army.

SHOA. Now more numerous than the trees in the forest.

ZONG. The river was black with them and their boats.

SHOA. And the smoke from their campfires mixed with the dust from their horses, wagons and chariots, and covered the gorge. The river faded from view.

ZONG. That is what I saw. We dressed so many for burial. So many.

[The drums become very loud and then fall silent.]

Slide Pair25

MANY COLORED HMONG

SHAO. Listen. It is so quiet. In Anhwei, Shensi, Honan--
ZONG.. The Hmong voices are silent. I don't hear from my cousins any more.
SHAO. In Hupeh Province--
ZONG. No more Hmong.
SHOA. In Hunan--
ZONG. Long trails of our people walk the mountain ridges into Kweichow. The land along the river is given to Chinese colonists.

Slide Pair 26

[CHINESE soldiers break the HMONG into groups, draping them in different colors.]

SHOA. In Kweichow and Sechwan, in the heart of the old Hmong Kingdom--
ZONG.. We are divided up and made to wear different colored clothing. The Sung believe that if our clothing is different, our traditions will begin to separate us; and we will never be one people again.
SHOA. And so, the Black Hmong, The Blue Hmong, The Flowery Hmong, The White Hmong, The Cowerie Shell Hmong, The Red Hmong all became distinct in Chinese eyes. But what do you see, Zong?
ZONG. Many-colored Hmong. One people. One way of life. One government. One King. One heart. We are still Hmong, but in very colorful clothing.

Slide Pair 27

[MUSIC begins, and the VILLAGERS, now in many colors, dance. ZONG sings a song.]

SHAO. In the heart of the old Hmong Kingdom, we returned to our work and our fields. We married, we raised our children, we built our houses. We heard a story that the Mongols under the great Khan Ghengis spread west to the farthest ends of the earth. We heard that they defeated the Sung; and it must have been true, because no Sung soldiers came into the mountains any more. We heard that the Mongols entered Tonkin to the east and Burma to the south. But they left us to ourselves high in the mountains where their war ponies could not find a foothold.

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[SHUE enters the stage, and is followed by an out-of-breath CHINESE TRADER.]

TRADER. Wait, Shue. Wait. I need to catch my breath. How can you Miao live up here?
ZONG. Miao!? It has been many generations since we heard that name. You will call us "Hmong" or my husband will ignore you!
TRADER. Alright. But I must tell you, Shue: our Ming Emperor is building a road through here into Burma.
SHUE. Ming?
TRADER. You don't get any news up here. But I don't think it matters much to you what happens in Beijing, eh? As long as the poppies grow? And the

HMONG ODYSSEY II:16

road, Shue--

ZONG. What road?

TRADER. Into Burma. The Burma road. It will cut through here from north to south. It will be good for business--connect you to markets with the Thai, the Burmese, and better access to China. You'll get rich and fat, Shue! And so will I.

[Exit TRADER.]

SHOA. The road did come; but we did not grow rich or fat. The Ming made the Lolo governors over the Hmong; and Ming soldiers were everywhere along the road that led out of Burma to the Yangtze. The road brought caravans, more soldiers, Chinese colonists--

[The sound of a single musket-shot echoes. One HMONG DANCER falls dead; and the happy MUSIC stops.]

SHOA. --and a new kind of death. The flintlock musket. We moved higher into the peaks--away from the river.

[The sound of a single musket-shot echoes. Another HMONG DANCER falls dead.]

SHOA. Supported by wealth from Asia, the Renaissance flourished far away in Italy. Silk, spices, foods, opium, and all the riches of this land moved from the mountains, along the rivers, and over the earth to European markets. In the eight years that it took Michelangelo to paint the Sistine Chapel, over 40,000 Hmong were killed in raids on villages and strongholds. In the year that Christopher Columbus sailed west, the Ming began building a great wall--like the one that failed to keep out the Mongols--to contain us in Kweichow. We were forbidden to travel outside.

MOUNTAIN REBELS

[The CAST works slowly as one SINGER sings a song of lament. TRADER enters with a CHINESE REBEL carrying a rifle. EVERYONE gathers for a conference.]

ZONG. What are they telling us, Shue? Who are these new people?

TRADER. They've come from the end of the silk road.

REBEL. The world is changing--getting smaller--the Europeans are in Tonkin under one flag, and in Burma under another, and in Shanghai on the coast. The Manchu Emperor treats them like his family and lets them take what they want. The Chinese people are treated no better than you Miao.

TRADER. Hmong. These people are Hmong. Shue, [looking around and lowering his voice] we Chinese are trying to make a revolution--to throw

HMONG ODYSSEY II:17

off the chains of the Manchu and throw out the Europeans. We want the Hmong to help us.

ZONG. [Pause]. They are starving, Shue. I'll get them something to eat. Take her rifle and see how it is made.

[While the TRADER AND REBEL are eating, men work at a forge--making guns in pantomime. SHAO steps forward.]

SHAO. In the next one hundred years, we harbored Chinese rebels. We made our own flint-lock rifles. We took control of the mountains once again. Even during Prince Ortai's fifty-year war against us, we expanded and held fast.

[Enter EMPEROR CH'IEN-LUNG with a COUNSELOR.]

CH'IEN-LUNG. [Angrily] I am Ch'ien-Lung, Emperor of all China; and I am writing the final Chapter of the Miao history. How dare you question this!

COUNSELOR. [Falling on her face] Not I, Emperor. It is in a letter from the Emperor of Britain. He claims that Miao highlanders have come into the mountains of Burma and Lao. The Emperor of France says the same is happening in Tonkin. The war that Prince Ortai began has only moved the Miao south; and they don't like it.

CH'IEN-LUNG. How can they be moving south, when they are moving north and west back into Sechwan?! There can't be that many of them! They are mistaken. Soon, we will have word from General Ouen-fou, giving us more accurate information.

COUNSELOR. Emperor. We will have no more word from Ouen-fou. He and his army are utterly destroyed in the Yangtze valley.

CH'IEN-LUNG. 120,000 armed troops destroyed?! I want 600,000 troops, cannon, exploding rockets. I want the men to supply them, food, clothing for all seasons, highland guides, maps. And bring the generals to me. In one year, there will be no more of these Miao!

[Exit EMPEROR CH'IEN-LUNG followed by COUNSELOR. The sound of drums and guns begins, as if far off. Then, a dance of battle begins.]

SHAO. Nine years of bloody warfare passed in what became the most costly military campaign in Chinese history. The toll on our people was even greater.

[The battle seems all but over. SHUE and ZONG try to help their people, but are taken and bound like slaves.]

ZONG. Wait 'til Sonom gathers his warriors! You will regret you ever touched a Hmong!

SHAO. King Sonom did gather his warriors; and they fought the Chinese to a standstill. Peace talks started; and Sonom opened his stronghold to receive

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HMONG ODYSSEY II:18

emissaries from the Emperor. It was a fatal mistake. In the same summer that America's Declaration of Independence was signed, the 26-year-old Hmong King Sonom was taken prisoner with 250 family and Court members by the Han General Akoui for the Manchu Emperor Ch'ien-lung. Sonom, his family, and every high-ranking Hmong were tortured--their bodies cut into pieces--and their heads put on public display. Ch'ien-lung began to eradicate the Hmong in the highlands. Death was swift and terrible. Only 10-12,000 of us were kept as slaves to tend the opium fields. Our books and records were destroyed. And we were forbidden to read and write in any language on pain of death. The Chinese wanted us ignorant and poor. To contain and control this remaining handful of slaves, over 1,500 military garrisons were built in Kweichow. That is one garrison of soldiers for every eight Hmong left alive.

[SHUE and ZONG are led off of the stage.]

PART III

THE LAND OF A MILLION ELEPHANTS AND ONE WHITE PARASOL

[A QENG PLAYER performs for a woman he is courting. PEOPLE are putting belongings together and tying on their packs. After a little while, THEY circle the QENG PLAYER on a stylized journey. KAI helps SENG lift his pack, as SHAO comes forward.]

SHAO. It was time again for the Hmong to move. KAI put his hand on his brother's shoulder and asked :

KAI. Where are we going, Seng?

SENG. South. To be free, KAI, in the high mountains in Lao. Lo Pa See says it is called "the land of a million elephants, and one white parasol"--

GRANDMOTHER. What kind of name is that? I don't want to go.

SENG. You have to come, grandmother. We can't leave you.

KAI. But how are we planning to get out? We don't have the rifles.

SENG. You know why the Hmong wall is only on the Hunnan border? Because they don't care if you go south into Lao. Believe me: no one's going to try and stop us. Lo Pa See has it all worked out with Ton Ma.

GRANDMOTHER. That Chinese? I'm not going.

KAI. Grandmother's right. Ton Ma is Chinese! He'll collect a bounty on our heads!

SENG. Ton Ma's only loyalty is to opium. He's found some place in Lao where he says the poppy will grow like no place on earth. But he needs us to grow it for him; and as long as he's in it for himself, we can trust him. We're worth more to him alive; and the more of us, the better. Hurry. We've got to follow the others. Grandmother,--

GRANDMOTHER. Let me die in my own home.

[The PEOPLE travel, carrying the GRANDMOTHER, and accompanied by music. Soon, SENG stops and faces out. His eyes grow wide. The MUSIC changes, as images of LAOS are projected.]

HMONG ODYSSEY II:20

SENG. There's a place I've seen in Lao; and when you see it, your jaw will drop astonished, your eyes will fill with tears, and you'll wonder if even heaven could be more beautiful.

GRANDMOTHER. This isn't bad, but where's my house?

SHAO. We came into a place of lush green jungle, of colored limestone karsts thrusting thousands of feet into the sky, of clear waters, of ample food and rain. Below, on the fertile banks of the Mekong River, lived the people of Lao. Halfway up the slopes above them, small tribes of Tho and Kha made their living. And spread among the hills were smaller groups of [INSERT NAMES OF TRIBES].

[SENG begins to dance to music.]

SHAO. We followed the Chinese trader Ton Ma into this paradise and prospered in the highest ridges. There were some disagreements, of course-

KAI. And big fights with the Kha sometimes.

SHAO. We filtered into Lao and Northern Tonkin. But Kweichow never left us, nor did Kansu, nor did Xinjiang, the ancient homeland. These travelled south with us. They lived with us in the sound of the Qeng; in the sound of our language, in our ways, and our clothing, in our government, and in our souls. And soon, it filled the high mountains near Nong Het. The Lo clan was the first to leave Kweichow; and Lo Pa See became kiatong of Nong Het. Soon word of the Lo's success spread throughout all the Hmong. Within a generation, the Ly clan came across the border from Sechwan to Nong Het; and the small Moua clan left years of bloody fighting and starvation in Yunnan to join them. {{INSERT NAMES OF THE OTHER CLANS}} We returned to a Hmong republican government whose laws and traditions had sustained us for a thousand years and more.

DANCING BETWEEN THE FACKEE AND THE BLACK FLAGS

KAI. [With a flintlock] Look at him! My brother Seng dances through life. Stop dancing, Seng. We need your help.

SENG: You're too serious, KAI.

KAI. And you dance and think too much. If you just took one look at what's going on in the world, you'd be serious too. They've raised the opium tax again.

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Slide Pair 35

HMONG ODYSSEY II:21

GRANDMOTHER. OF COURSE. That's what they do.

SENG. I'm not deaf and blind, KAI. I know what's going on.

GRANDMOTHER. Who are you calling deaf? GET OUT AND DO SOME WORK.

KAI. It isn't fair. Why don't they just leave us alone?

GRANDMOTHER. Them? The opium tax raisers? Leave us alone? The Chinese and the Fackee don't think like that.

SHAO. The French in Tonkin called themselves Francé. We Hmong pronounced it Fackee.

KAI. The Fackee are in Tonkin. What do they mean by raising our taxes in Lao? Is this their land?

SENG. Maybe. We haven't been here too long.

SHAO. The land belonged to everyone and to no one. Nong Het was claimed by the Lao, the Kha, the Tonkinese King, the Hmong, and the French.

KAI. The world has gone crazy. Everybody's everybody else's master. We should fight them, and show them we won't be treated like--

SENG. Fight all of them? You're the one who's crazy, KAI. We should send someone to go talk to them and try to straighten things out.

GRANDMOTHER. Talk to them? The Chinese and Fackee don't have ears. They're as deaf as a stone.

KAI. I'll go talk to them [shaking his rifle] with this!

GRANDMOTHER. If you want to shoot something, go shoot something for us to eat. GO ON!

[SHAO comes to the door.]

SHENG. Shao, please come in.

GRANDMOTHER. Who is that? Is it your Grandfather?

KAI. Grandfather is dead.

GRANDMOTHER. I know he's dead, but is he back?

SHENG. It's Shao, Grandmother.

HMONG ODYSSEY II:22

GRANDMOTHER. Shao! Come in and talk to these boys. KAI won't shoot anything for supper, and Sheng isn't married yet. Is that how boys should act? [To SHAO] Have something to eat.

SHAO. THANK YOU. [He sits.] What are you hunting today, KAI?

KAI. [With a look to SHENG] They've raised the tax again, Shao.

SHENG. My brother thinks if he shoots some Fackee, they will all go home.

GRANDMOTHER. If you cut down one tree in the jungle, will all the other trees run away? NO.

SHAO. The taxes, the Fackee, the Chinese: these are not troubles we will solve so easily. In your grandfather's time, there had been a Great Rebellion in the Chinese Province of Taiping--many months' journey to the northeast. Thousands of Chinese rebels were badly mauled by their emperor's soldiers and fled over the border into Tonkin.

KAI. Is that where Uncle Doua lives?

SENG. OF COURSE. Be quiet and listen.

SHAO. But these Chinese didn't come alone. No. Who do you think they had with them?

KAI. The Fackee.

GRANDMOTHER. HAVE SOMETHING TO DRINK, SHAO.

SHAO. THANK YOU. No, KAI. There were thousands of Hmong with the Chinese rebels.

KAI. Hmong? With the Chinese? So they were hostages! And this tax is a ransom that Uncle Doua can't pay.

SHAO. These Chinese and Hmong were allies.

KAI. Allies? With the Chinese? I DON'T BELIEVE IT.

GRANDMOTHER. It's true. Ask your grandfather.

SENG. Sit down, KAI. They were both running from the Chinese Emperor.

SHAO. They had even organized themselves into a big army before they came to Tonkin. They defeated the Tonkinese border guards, and they captured

HMONG ODYSSEY II:23

some land on the Song Chay River where your Uncle is. It looked like they'd set up their own little country right there, but they didn't.

KAI. They probably couldn't decide what to call it: The land of a million elephants, a thousand Chinese, and a bunch of Hmong refugees?

SENG. KAI! BE QUIET!

SHAO. For some reason, they continued to march down out of the mountains toward the big city where the Tonkinese King lived.

SENG. Hanoi. They attacked Hanoi?

GRANDMOTHER. Your mother's family comes from the Song Chay, Seng.

KAI. Chinese rebels and Hmong people conquering the Kingdom of Tonkin! So is this a tax to change the furniture in the palace?

SHAO. They never got to Hanoi. When they followed the river down to the delta, the air got very thick and very hot, and the leeches--little animals that look like chicken livers and suck out your blood--these clung to their ankles.

GRANDMOTHER. When you go to find a wife, Seng, don't go there.

SHAO. They were bitten by insects. The Hmong got diseases that made them all sick. Many were dying.

GRANDMOTHER. They should have stayed in the mountains.

SHAO. And while they were sick and wondering what they should do, they were attacked by both Tonkinese and Fackee soldiers riding on the tops of elephants, and shooting modern rifles.

GRANDMOTHER. Biting chicken livers and elephants with rifles! Why would you want a wife from such a place?

SENG. No, grandmother. The Fackee and Tonkinese had the rifles.

SHAO. But seeing those elephants, the Hmong came back to their senses. "What do we want to conquer Tonkin for? It's a country of disease and mosquitoes!" So they retreated into the mountains and the land they'd gotten on the Song Chay River.

KAI. Which they named "Land of a Million Elephants Chasing Us Hmong Up the River."

HMONG ODYSSEY II:24

SENG. LET SHAO TELL THE STORY.

KAI. It doesn't explain the tax.

SHAO. After helping the Tonkinese defeat the Chinese and Hmong rebels, the Fackee got off their borrowed elephants and--

KAI. They needed money to pay the drivers.

SENG. KAI! Show some respect, AND BE QUIET.

SHAO. But KAI is right. War is always expensive, and being short of money, the Fackee attacked the Tonkinese and conquered them. Tonkin got a new name: Viet Nam.

KAI. But the Fackee were the Tonkinese's friends.

SHAO. Only as long as they needed the elephants. As soon as they climbed down, they made a treaty with the Chinese emperor. The Chinese needed to pay for the cost of the Taiping rebellion, and they put an opium tax on the Chinese Hmong because it is the Hmong who grew the opium. The Fackee put an opium tax on the Laotian Hmong for the cost of the takeover of Viet Nam!

KAI. So that's what this rise in the tax is!

SHAO. That was the reason for the first tax. The increase comes later. So, now you might think that the Chinese and Fackee had become friends and were working together; but you would be wrong. The Chinese sent soldiers across the borders to steal things from everyone and to kill whoever they found-- Hmong, Lao, Vietnamese, Fackee, and even their own Chinese people.

KAI. And the Fackee signed such a treaty? That would allow the Chinese to do that?

GRANDMOTHER. The Fackee are like that. You put something in front of them, they will put their name on it.

SHAO. The Chinese soldiers carry a black flag instead of a Chinese flag, which makes them "unofficial" soldiers.

KAI. [Standing angrily] So the Black Flags are really Chinese soldiers?

SENG. Unofficial Chinese soldiers. So they are only unofficially stealing from us and the Fackee and unofficially killing us both.

KAI. Unofficially? You think that makes us feel any better?

HMONG ODYSSEY II:25

GRANDMOTHER. I felt bad when they killed your grandfather. He doesn't come around much anymore.

KAI. The Fackee are taxing us for being killed.

SENG. No, KAI. I think I understand. The Fackee are taxing us for not being killed. If we Hmong join with them to fight these Black Flags, they say they'll pay us to give them soldiers and mountain guides. Aren't they paying you, KAI?

KAI. But paying us isn't taxing us, is it?

SHAO. But how will they pay us? They'll collect the money for your pay by once again raising our taxes for the money. This is why they have raised the tax.

[KAI goes out and begins to clean his rifle.]

KAI. I understand; but it only makes me angry.

SENG. [To SHAO] My brother KAI thinks that because I am happy I am deaf and blind.

GRANDMOTHER. Who are you calling blind? You should get married, Seng.

SENG. It doesn't bother me that the Chinese and the Fackee don't like us. But I hate that they think we're stupid. I don't want to kill them like KAI does. I would rather be like Shue Cha who became headman in that village on the border. The Chinese were to the north. The Fackee were to the south and east. They would probably stay because they had been in Tonkin for two hundred years. So Shue Cha did not say, like my brother KAI, "What are they going to do to me next?" No. Shue Cha thought to himself, "I'll play the tune, and the Chinese and French can dance to my music." So Shue Cha took all the opium that his clansmen harvested and sold it to the Chinese. "What do I care about the Fackee?" he told them. And he took all the coffin wood trees that his clansmen cut and sold them to the French, saying, "What do I care about those Chinese?" He played the tune, and they danced to his music. The Black flags left him alone; and the French didn't tax him.

SHAO. It's a good story. Shue Cha was a good man. He is gone now.

[KAI takes up the rifle. A number of men join him.]

SENG. Where are you going, KAI?

KAI. Hunting. [HE begins to exit, then turns back to SENG.] We've got to push them both back, or we'll be suffocated between them.

HMONG ODYSSEY II:26

SENG. You can't fight two giants at once, KAI! Listen.

KAI. You want me to dance for them both like you and Shue Cha? Let me go!
And dance your dance alone, Seng.

GRANDMOTHER. Seng, when will your wife come to live with me?

[KAI travels with the other men. GRANDMOTHER leaves the stage as
SHAO stands.]

THE LO CLAN COLLAPSES

SHAO. In the middle of the last century, just after Abraham Lincoln was killed in America, the Hmong men of the Lo clan took up their rifles and descended on the Frenchmen's Lao headquarters in Kieng Khouang city. They fired a volley and began to reload their flintlocks. The French fired back . . . And kept firing, without reloading. They had modern repeater rifles.

[SENG, horrified, watches as HMONG men fall in slow motion. Silence.
Then SENNG begins to pack his things. WOMEN drag the MEN off the stage.]

KAI. [Standing, stunned] We fell like grass before the scythe, Grandmother.

SENG. Grandmother is gone. She was talking to Grandfather all afternoon. I think she made him promise to build her a new house. She's gone to live with him.

SHAO. With the Lo clan in collapse, Moua Tong Ger defied the rifles and walked straight to the French to speak for all the Hmong of Lao.

KAI. Seng! Why didn't they kill us all? Why didn't they chase us into the mountains? Why did they let Moua Tong Ger pass through to them?

SENG. Moua Tong Ger and the Fackee have come to an agreement, KAI.

SHAO. Moua Tong Ger had succeeded where rifles had failed.

KAI. Why didn't they order the soldiers to wipe us out, like the Chinese?

SENG. The Fackee have ears, KAI. Moua Tong Ger is now invited to represent the Hmong in the Lao government. I'm going with him.

KAI. What? The land is yours, since you're the oldest. You have to farm it.

SENG. I'm going to help organize our people. It's a different world, KAI.

HMONG ODYSSEY II:27

[Exit SENG. OTHER FIGHTERS join KAI.]

SHAO. We had gained a voice in the modern political life of Indochina.

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KAI. [To the FIGHTERS.] You're right. It is hard to listen to the Fackee tell us what to do and how to live. But my brother Seng is right, too: Without the Fackee, the Black Flags will stream over the border. We need to join with the Fackee and the Lao against the Black Flags. We'll lead them into the mountains. We'll keep the paths open. We'll run raids where the Fackee can't go. We'll help to hold Lao and this new Viet Nam together--Not for the Fackee, but with them. With our rifles, we'll give my brother Seng and Moua Tong Ger their precious time to dance. Dance well, Seng!

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[KAI and FIGHTERS run off.]

THE NEW CENTURY

[Enter SENG and MAI in half-western clothes. Throughout the remainder of this section, SENG will gradually assume a more western appearance, until he is in a business suit and wire-framed glasses. KAI will remain in traditional costume, but he will gradually look poorer, harder, and bitten by battle. SENG is joined by OTHERS who pantomime as he speaks.]

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SHAO. We sent children to French and Lao schools. We sent leaders to speak on our behalf in the government. A French missionary helped us make a new written language and a dictionary in Hmong. We listened to the Missionaries. We learned about the world.

[SENG and MAI practice a French lesson.]

MAI. You work so hard at your French.

SENG. We have to work hard. It probably won't get much better for us, but the little kids--the next generation of Hmong will be equals in the government of Lao.

MAI. It already is better for us, Seng. We're doing things my mother could never imagine. Sometimes I feel bad that I'm not helping more with the harvest.

SENG. Don't give up, Mai. You see the mountains over there? Somewhere up there my brother KAI is keeping the Chinese Tigers at bay. For the harvest, for Moua Tong Ger, and for us. But he can't fight forever.

MAI. They are once again like the legends of Hmong warriors.

HMONG ODYSSEY II:28

SENG. And we are once again earning respect as diplomats and statesmen.

SHAO. But for perhaps the first time in our long history, we were a divided people. What the Shang could not do by breaking us up, what the Manchu could not do by dividing us into clans, the modern world began to do. Communication with those who remained in Kweichow and Sechwan became more and more difficult as the border with China tightened. Those of us who lived in Lao fought alongside the French to hold back the Chinese. Those of us who lived in northern Viet Nam--those like Pa Chay--plotted with the Vietnamese to overthrow the French.

[Pantomime dance of PA CHAY rebellion as SENG receives messages on a telegraph. MAI is given a typewriter.]

KAI. From Lao, we watched our kinsman Pa Chay rise to power across the border. We saw him lead his brief rebellion against the Fackee.

[Pantomime ends. A FRENCH OFFICER approaches SENG].

SENG. [Handing the message to the OFFICER] Pa Chay died by assassination.

OFFICER. Good. Now maybe you Meo will get back to work.

MAI. Hmong.

OFFICER. What's that?

SENG. She says we are Hmong; not Meo.

[Exit OFFICER.]

MAI. Does he think we're not working?

SENG. We try so hard to get them to trust us; and then something like this erases it all.

MAI. Don't think like that. If they didn't trust you, would they let you watch the telegraph? And they haven't taken away my typewriter. I tell my mother what I do all day for money: make words with a writing machine. She can't understand it. She says if I am going to spend day and night with a man in a little room, we should be married. Then I won't have to make up stories about a writing machine that no one believes.

[SENG looks at MAI for a long time.]

SENG. Your mother is right.

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Slide Pair 40

HMONG ODYSSEY II:29

[THEY look at each other until the telegraph begins to chatter. SENG returns to work. Around them, a festival takes shape. The table and typewriter are put aside; and SENG and MAI join the festival. After a while, things calm down; and KAI greets SENG.]

KAI. SENG! And Mai! WELCOME TO OUR FAMILY, MAI.

SENG. KAI! I thought you were still away.

KAI. We are fighting pitched battles and small skirmishes all over the North, and we struggle to raise our families. Are we better off or worse now? Things are changing very fast, Seng. The Fackee have telegraphs, and their guns get better and better. But so do the Chinese'.

MAI. Who is Touby Lyfoung? Have you met him?

KAI. Touby? The kid with the bicycle?

SENG. Kid? Every time we get a telegraph from the north, it mentions Touby Lyfoung. He's everywhere!

KAI. He's working with that Fackee, Gau--

MAI. Gaultier. You know him, Seng.

SENG. They're thinking of getting this kid out of the mountains to organize the Hmong. I don't think they know how young he is.

KAI. Typical Fackee: they find somebody who's good at what they do, and then make him do something else. STUPID! Touby Lyfoung and his squad are our eyes and ears against the Black Flags. He's a first-rate fighter, speaks French, and his information is always right. They'd take one look at him and make him a house boy.

MAI. He sent us a boy last month from the Ly clan with a note pinned to his shirt and money stitched into his clothes for his education. What kind of a fighter is that?

KAI. The best kind. He's like you and me put together, Seng. They say he never sleeps.

THE MAQUIS AND THE JAPANESE EMPIRE

SHAO. The year that Touby Lyfoung became tasseng of the Laotian Hmong, the French were in trouble; and far away to the west, their homeland fell to a modern German Empire. The Occupied French Government was forced to allow the Japanese Empire into Indochina. The Japanese moved quickly to

Slide Pair 41

Slide Pair 42

HMONG ODYSSEY II:30

occupy all of our area, taking what they needed for food, materials, and manpower; building airstrips and supply roads to the west for their war against the British. Aircraft, automobiles, wireless radio. The old people feared these things. The young people wanted them. But no one wanted the Japanese. Quietly, Touby Lyfoung organized small groups of French patriots and Hmong fighters into an effective resistance called the maquis.

KAI. During this war (My brother Seng says it is a world war. Is that possible?) the black flags are gone; and the Chinese border is open. Many of us have gone higher into the mountains where the Japanese don't follow. Many of us have been taken as slave labor; but they've taken many more Lao than Hmong. And we in the maquis bite the Japanese like gnats, sting them like wasps.

Slide Pair 43

SHAO. And some followed Touby's rival Faydang who helped the Japanese against Touby and his guerillas.

KAI. It makes no sense to fight against other Hmong. This world is crazy!

[Enter SENG in a business suit and glasses. He is in a lively discussion with a Frenchman.]

SENG. But listen to me, Eugene. Ho Chi Minh was educated in France--he's practically French himself. And he led the resistance against the Japanese in Viet Nam. The Hmong have helped him, the French have helped him, and he's supplied by the Americans. Even the Chinese helped him fight the Japanese. They have Ho Chi Minh, and we have Touby Lyfoung.

Slide Pair 44

EUGENE. But he's a Marxist! As soon as the war's over and the Japanese go home, believe me: we're going to have to fight that little Marxist and take away the guns we gave him. I don't know what the French position in Indochina will be when the war is over. But in the meantime: We don't want you Meo making friends with Ho Chi Minh.

[Exit EUGENE. SENG stares after him, then wipes his glasses.]

AN INDEPENDENT LAO?

SHAO. In six years, the European war was over. In the Pacific, the Japanese were humiliated; and half the world celebrated.

Slide Pair 45

MAI. March 2, 1945. Stop. Japanese in retreat. Stop. French government administrators still in Japanese prison. Stop.

SENG. Touby Lyfoung is meeting with Lao leaders and with Prince Phetsarath.

MAI. What?

SENG. Great things are about to happen. Any word from the North?

SHAO. Prince Phetsarath moved quickly and decisively to form an independent Laotian government. Many Hmong aided him and our Laotian compatriots. The constitution was finished by October, and there was a feeling of great exhilaration. By the New Year, we would be partners in an independent Lao.

Slide Pair 46

KAI. From the mountains, we can see across the Viet Nam border. The Japanese are leaving; but Ho Chi Minh's American-supplied troops do not disband. Now known as the Vietminh, they are regrouping under the command of General Vo Nguyen Giap. This makes me uneasy.

SENG. Answer him, Mai: Lo KAI: The Vietminh want independence in their own land as we do in ours. In Luan Prabang, Hmong, Tho, Kha and Lao statesmen are meeting to form a new parliament under the new constitution.

KAI. But from the mountains, we can see the Fackee return like flower blossoms on the wind: hundreds of parachutes spilling from aircraft over the palace of King Sisavang Vong.

Slide Pair 47

SENG: The French fall from the sky on silk wings.

MAI. French Commandos hold King Sisavang Vong under house arrest. Stop.

KAI. We had all fought a common enemy. But who are now our friends, Seng?

MAI. King Sisavang Vong today renounced independence, and stripped his son the Prince of all power. Stop.

SENG: Lao, Cambodia, and Viet Nam reclaimed by the Fackee. Stop. Independent Lao leaders captured. Stop. Why wouldn't the Fackee join us, Mai?

"LIBERATED" BY THE VIETMINH

KAI. From the mountains, we can see the Vietminh pour across the border like locusts, moving swiftly to liberate territory from the French in Northern Viet Nam and Northeastern Lao. They fly their communist flag. They throw our farmers off their land. They burn our villages. They rape. They murder our people. They take our food. They act more like Black Flags than liberators.

Slide Pair 48

SENG. Faydang has joined them, Mai. Did KAI say where he was going?

MAI. Hunting. That's all he has written. "Going hunting."

HMONG ODYSSEY II:32

SENG. He's gone with Touby Lyfoung and the Fackee to push the Vietminh and Faydang back out of Lao.

KAI. Who are our friends now, Seng?

SHAO. It was like a clap of thunder which begins a storm you think will never end.

MAI. Send this: French engage Vietminh in Northern Viet Nam. Stop. Expected to crush Vietminh rebels within month. Stop.

SENG. French fall back. Stop. China becomes communist. Stop. Chinese troops reinforce Vietminh. Stop. Korea in civil war. Stop.

Slide Pair 49

MAI. Money and guns arriving from England, and USA. Stop. French recruit montagnard fighters to help defeat Vietminh. Stop.

Slide Pair 50

KAI. The French are launching a major fight, and we are once again needed as their friends. We lead them into the mountains. We keep the paths open. We run guerilla raids. We help to hold the Lao border and to contain the war in Viet Nam. Not for the French, but with them.

SENG. It is more important than ever to send our children to school, but so much of what we grow and earn has to be used to support this new war. There is nothing but ocean to the South. In every other direction? War. The Hmong can no longer retreat.

Slide Pair 51

LO CHAO QUANG: THE WARRIOR IN VIET NAM

SHAO. High in the mountains of northern Viet Nam, in the middle of the wasp's nest where Ho Chi Minh kept and trained his army, there was a great Hmong headman named Lo Chao Quang. His strength and daring were legendary among the Hmong; and even the Chinese told stories of the one-eyed man who could outshoot anyone who challenged him.

SENG. Touby's guerillas hold the Vietminh contained in the west, and with Lo Chao Quang harrassing them from the north, the French can concentrate an advance with its main force from the south.

EUGENE. What you're talking about is expensive, Lo Seng. But with Operation X--

MAI. Operation X? That sounds like something in a paperback novel.

EUGENE. We're transporting Hmong opium by aircraft to Saigon where it will be sold to international drug syndicates. The money will come back to us in the form of weapons and training for Hmong fighters and the Royal Lao

HMONG ODYSSEY II:33

Military.

MAI. We need to keep sending our children to school. We need money for food and medicine--not just guns.

EUGENE. First, we defeat the Vietminh; then we talk about social programs.

KAI. We received new weapons and trained men, but the French did not advance. They were inching back toward Hanoi. Many of us thought--no, we knew, that the French soldiers were not fighting for their homes or families as we were. They fought well, but not with their hearts. Would they abandon us too soon? Lo Chao Quang brought his Hmong partisans in from the north, and defeated several Vietminh and Chinese battalions. He soon controlled the border provinces in Viet Nam, waiting for the French to join him and crush the Vietminh.

SENG. We are receiving urgent dispatches, Eugene: The French troops are not moving forward.

KAI. Lo Chao Quang held his positions for an entire year while the French lost ground.

MAI. Lo Chao Quang routed by three Chinese Divisions. Stop. Presumed hiding in the mountains of southern China. Stop.

EUGENE. Let me see that! Who told him to retreat? How can we fight a war if
- -

MAI. We are lucky we didn't lose Lo Chao Quang. He's still out there; and he'll be back.

SENG. I've been thinking about what you said about social programs having to wait. While you French fight fixed land battles, the Vietminh are sending political activists into the cities and villages, telling people about social programs. The Pathet Lao and Viet Cong are fighting the war from within the interiors of French-held land. You might only be stalled in your military war, but you're losing the political one. It's a war the French generals do not know how to fight. Maybe if--

EUGENE. We've been friends for years, Seng. I agree with you, but it's not my place.

KAI. Lo Chao Quang had replenished his troops with Chinese Hmong and filtered them back into Viet Nam. This time, he was met by two seasoned Chinese and one seasoned Vietminh Division--all waiting for his return. Trapped without an escape route, Lo Chao Quang and his Hmong fighters held on for a month, reducing the enemy's numbers to a quarter of their full

HMONG ODYSSEY II:34

strength. The French did not advance.

SENG. Lo Chao Quang is dead. Stop. Vietminh have pushed the French into southern Viet Nam. Stop.

[EUGENE puts papers into his briefcase and EXITS.]

GENEVA

KAI. From the mountains, we can see the Vietminh swarm unhindered to our border. Roads are snaking closer. Supply stations are filling up. They move with both speed and patience, and are joined by communist Pathet Lao troops in Northeastern Laos.

MAI. French defensive positions over-run. Stop. Hmong non-commissioned officer Vang Pao aids French retreat. Stop. Touby Lyfoung's guerillas supplying vital information. Stop. French and Lao forces fortify Plain of Jars. Stop. SENG! Where are you going?

SENG. Hunting. I'm going as a Laotian aide to the treaty talks in Geneva.

MAI. Invasion. Stop. Hmong and Lao fighters under Touby Lyfoung and Vang Pao repel General Giap's Vietminh. Stop.

SHAO. In Europe, while Ho Chi Minh was meeting with French officials, Dien Bien Phu fell to the Vietminh. The Geneva accord was signed, which recognized North Vietnam as an independent nation and required the French to withdraw from both North Vietnam and Lao. Although the Vietnamese were also required to withdraw from Laos, they did not. And even as fighting raged in Northeast Lao, UN inspectors from the Soviet Union and Poland, from their hotel rooms in Thailand, reported no trace of the Vietminh in Lao. The French withdrew.

KAI. Touby's guerilla's and a small, undertrained Royal Lao Army face what is now a well-trained, well-armed combined force of the North Viet Nam Army, Pathet Lao, Chinese troops, Soviet Advisors, and a "neutralist division" of Laotian troops. They mass for a major offensive into Lao. Seng, you had better dance your dance well--because we won't hold out long with guns.

[All action stops.]

MAI. Lo Seng, Grand Hotel, Geneva, Switzerland: stop. Don't come home. Stop. Too dangerous. Stop. [Pause.] Pregnant. Stop.

Slide Pair 52

PART IV

The Americans

SLIDE PAIR 52

[TWO MEN enter carrying materials for construction. ZZ is sawing a board.]

- XX. YOU'RE CRAZY! Doesn't Touby know the NVA is in every province along the border?
- YY. He knows. Everybody knows.
- XX. Then why build these schools? We need to fight the Vietnamese; not build schools!

SLIDE PAIR 53

- ZZ. What do you think's going to happen to our families while you're out there with your gun? I'll tell you: the communists in the Pathet Lao will come to our village, talk to people, talk to the kids. Pretty soon, the kids will be joining the communists. Why? Because the communists are the only ones educating them. Touby knows that. And think about this: if we finally have peace, we'll need teachers, engineers, mechanics, farmers, doctors--everything. And not Fackee ones this time, but Hmong and Lao and Tai. The Fackee are gone.
- XX. What about those Fackee in the radio house?
- YY. Them? They aren't Fackee. [Begins to exit.]
- XX. [Following YY] What do you mean? They look like Fackee.
- YY. They're the guys I was telling you about: They come from a country called "Eisenhower."

SLIDE PAIR 54 : CIA MEN/RADIO HOUSE

[Exit YY and XX.]

- ZZ. [To the Audience:] It was 1957; and the American President sent us the CIA. They supported the Laotian government; and gave us help for our war against the communists. The North Vietnamese said that the Americans recruited us for the American war against the people of Southeast Asia. But it was the Royal Lao government who recruited General Eisenhower when the Fackee left. If they'd come four years earlier, they could have helped Lo Chao Quang and the Fackee break the backs of the Vietminh. [HE shrugs.] But how would they have known what was happening here?

[Exit ZZ.]

Civil War

SLIDE PAIR 55: VANG PAO AND SOLDIERS

[ENTER AA and BB, businessmen.]

- AA. I need to move twelve tons of rice up to the 10th Infantry Battalion.
- BB. [Whistles.] That's a lot of rice right now. The paths are all mud; and we'll have to carry it on our backs.
- AA. Just get it to Long Cheng. The Americans have an airplane there now. We'll drop the rice by parachute; so you should double bag it.
- BB. [Whistles] Parachutes. AMAZING! Say: what's going on up there, anyway?
- AA. The Pathet Lao has put together a communist army in North Vietnam. They just attacked the 10th on the Plain of Jars. Everybody thinks they're trying to split the northern provinces away from Lao.
- BB. They will, too. The 10th Battalion is a bunch of lowlanders. They won't last a week up on the plateau. They'll all die of nosebleeds.
- AA. General Vang Pao left this morning. He's going to be in command up there; and Touby Lyfong is sending him about 20,000 Hmong soldiers.
- BB. Vang Pao? [Whistles] AMAZING! I can have eight tons of rice in Long Cheng by morning if you give me two trucks. Three days otherwise.
- AA. Two trucks? I'll see what I can do. Oh, and General Vang Pao would like the rice to be cooked and hot when it's delivered by airplane.
- BB. [Whistles] AMAZING! Food from the sky.

[Exit AA and BB.]

SLIDE PAIR 56: STATESMEN

[ENTER ZZ carrying a large sack of rice.]

- ZZ. A year of fighting and a lot of rice later, we all thought that if the Pathet Lao got a voice in the government the civil war would end. So we formed a coalition parliament. That just encouraged the communists to increase the pressure on the Plain of Jars. They didn't want a voice; they wanted control.

[Enter XX and YY carrying sacks of rice. Exit ZZ.]

SLIDE PAIR 57: JOHN KENNEDY'S INAUGURATION

- XX. That's the silliest thing I've ever heard! The Americans have a revolution every four years?
- YY. That's what they say. It's their law.
- XX. They must all drink as much whiskey as those CIA guys! So who's in charge

now? Will they still help us against the communists?

YY. They put Eisenhower and his family on a train and shipped them to a place called Kansas. Then another family took over. They used to be smugglers but became politicians. And they became Catholics too.

XX. I DON'T BELIEVE IT.

[Exit XX and YY. Enter ZZ wearing a Medic's helmet and bag.]

SLIDE PAIR 59

ZZ. President Kennedy was new to this war. He started out by looking for a diplomatic way out. He got the North Vietnamese to agree to a ceasefire in 1961; and the Pathet Lao said they would agree to a ceasefire on the Plain of Jars. But Communist and neutralist forces immediately assaulted Vang Pao at Padong. Because there was no fighting in Vietnam right then, North Vietnamese Regular Army troops showed up on the scene and joined the Pathet Lao. The war became international. And America gave us more aid.

[Enter AA and BB. Exit ZZ.]

SLIDE PAIR 60: LONG CHENG

BB. You should get up to Long Cheng some time. I tell you, it's as big as a city. The refugees from the hills are building houses faster than you can count them; Vang Pao has moved his headquarters there; and the Americans have built the biggest runway I've ever seen. If you could stick wings on the King's palace, it could land there, no problem.

AA. Is Touby up there?

BB. Sometimes. He's got a house he stays in. He brought a load of teachers and nurses in from Vientienne last month. And he took a few more Hmong soldiers down to the officers training school. Oh! That reminds me: we need about fourteen pillows about this big, and this thick.

AA. Pillows?

BB. The Americans are training Hmong fighter pilots in Thailand, since we know the country so well;--

SLIDE PAIR 61: HMONG FIGHTER PILOT

--but they can't see out the windows without sitting on a pillow. I think they have to fly upside down or something.

AA. Fourteen pillows. Anything else?

BB. Can we get airplane fuel and oil in beer kegs? The men are building small airstrips in the mountains; but the women complain about carrying the big drums up the steep paths.

AA. Beer kegs? I guess we can sell the beer back to the Americans. I'll see what I can do.

[Exit AA and BB. Enter ZZ as a guerilla with a number of others.]

SLIDE PAIR 62: HMONG JUNGLE FIGHTERS

ZZ. Hmong infantry controlled the high jungles. But one of the most dangerous missions was to find and remove downed US pilots before the communists could get to them. Many of these pilots were flying missions from Vietnam and Thailand and had never seen Hmong before. So one of the first things we had to do was to capture and disarm the American so he wouldn't shoot us with his pistol. Then we could save him and get him back to his airbase. [Pause] For every American saved, about a dozen Hmong lost their lives. Why pay that kind of price? Because without the American planes in the sky, the communists would swarm in like ants.

[Exit ZZ. Enter XX and YY carrying an American Soldier.]

SLIDE PAIR 63: LYNDON JOHNSON SWEARING IN

XX. So they didn't put their President Kennedy on a Train and send him to Kansas?
YY. No. They sent him to the province of Texas and shot him. It's the truth! Now, the old governor of Texas gets to be president.

[Exit XX and YY. ZZ lays out maps and papers for others to study.]

SLIDE PAIR 64: STATESMEN

ZZ. You might think it strange, but even during the war, Lao improved life for its citizens. Education, medicine, roads, industry--these things owed their existence not just to American aid, but to the vision of men like Touby Lyfong who worked tirelessly for all the people of Lao. When President Kennedy was killed, Touby and the others did not panic. The Hmong had thousands of years of experience in watching governments come and go. They immediately set to work, knowing that the new President of the Americans would want to end the Southeast Asian conflicts in his own way. Vang Pao and the CIA led a strong offensive against the communists, and we gained control of most of Sam Neua Province. That was in 1963.

[Enter AA reading a bill of lading; and BB.]

SLIDE PAIR 65: ROYAL LAOTIAN ARMY

AA. Truck and aircraft parts.

BB. We'll get those out of Bangkok. No problem.

AA. Hoe and ax heads--shovels.

BB. Farming stuff?

AA. Vang Pao and the American bombers have pushed the NVA back almost to the border. While the NVA puts their best troops into offensives in South

Vietnam, the farmers are trying to get crops into the ground. There are some Pathet Lao and Vietnamese communists still on the Plain of Jars; but the war seems to be turning our way.

BB. Okay: Farming stuff. I'll get some seed rice and vegetable stock out of Bangkok too.

[Exit AA and BB.]

Christmas, 1965

SLIDE PAIR 66

[ZZ places an old phonograph in the center of the floor. HE puts on an old 45 rpm record which scratches out "CHESTNUTS ROASTING ON AN OPEN FIRE."]

ZZ. Nice song, huh? The American guys played it over and over during the Christmas cease-fire of 1965. The Americans weren't very happy. Sure, they were away from home. They told us that their families didn't even know where they were. But the officers were really mad about the ceasefire. Together, we'd pushed the NVA off all the high ground in Laos. We were even doing some damage to the Ho Chi Minh trail. Then, their president told them they had to pull back. The ceasefire lasted for thirty-seven days. I don't think their President Johnson knew what General Giap could do in thirty-seven days. The NVA completely replenished their forces in South Vietnam and Cambodia and built up for a major offensive into Lao. [HE lifts the needle, and stops the record.] While Jack Frost was nipping at their noses in America, General Giap made a massive assault on the Plain of Jars. Vang Pao was wounded and had to be choppered out for surgery. We lost thousands of men; but our forces held. Giap pulled back and didn't take any more ground. But he didn't give up any ground either.

For three years, things went like this. The Americans wanted the Vietnamese communists to make peace, so they would offer a ceasefire. Peace talks would begin while the communists built up their forces. The peace talks would end in the same minute that the communists attacked. For three years, Vang Pao led the Royal Laotian Army in the north, slowly increasing the size of territories held--winning back Laotian land. Then General Giap made a tactical mistake in '68 when he over-committed his troops in an attempt to wipe out the Royal Laotian Army on the Plain of Jars. We defeated them, and cut their supply lines. The huge offensive had left the communist positions on the Plain of Jars vulnerable; and Vang Pao attacked immediately. In a few months, the Royal Laotian Army captured the Plain of Jars.

THE OTHER WAR

[Enter CC WITH WOMEN]

SLIDE PAIR 67

- CC. We were winning the war then. That's what the men told us. They knew about rifles and airplanes and war and Touby Lyfong and Vang Pao and the CIA men. But we women knew something else. We had never worked so hard to get food; to keep our children alive. We had to hide fields of rice while they grew. That meant that we had to grow the rice far away from the villages and never use the same path twice. If the communists found the field, they would burn it or take the rice away when it was ready. We hid food in caves and under rocks. We hid our children too.
- People were getting skinny.
 - Cloth for making clothing was hard to find.
 - Most of the men were gone.
- CC. When they burn your field, you replace it with another. When they burn your house, you make a new one. But how long does it take to replace a man? How long does it take to make new soldiers and husbands and farmers that the war eats up like a hungry Tiger. They say there is no such thing as a Hmong orphan because people will always care for the children without parents.
- But there are so many of them. And so few of us.
 - And Parents dying every day.
- CC. And the boys would go to the war as soon as they were big enough to drag a rifle.
- And the girls?
- CC. It was better to be a boy and die with a gun in your hand than to be a girl and let the communists find you. [Pause]
- People were forgetting things.
 - Old women starved or killed themselves with opium so they wouldn't burden their families.
- CC. But they were our teachers. And they were dying too fast. The men said Vang Pao had gotten back the Plain of Jars. We women knew that the war could not last much longer.

Retreat to Long Cheng

SLIDE PAIR 68

[Enter ZZ and other MEN. They sit in silence with the WOMEN while pictures of riots in the USA appear behind them.]

- ZZ. Another President; and they said that times were hard in America. Their congress passed a law--the Cooper Amendment--banning any more US funds for aid in Laos. We had just gotten word of this when the NVA attacked in the north with new Soviet equipment, tanks and aircraft.
- Soviet?
- ZZ. They are communists from north of China, I think. They hated the Americans. [Pause] Vang Pao's army was overwhelmed. The CIA men packed their things.

They cried. Then they went home. Vang Pao retreated to Long Cheng.

CC. How long will the bullets last?

ZZ. Not long. How much food do we have?

CC. Not enough.

ZZ. Where are you going?

CC. To plant rice.

- To have babies and make them into soldiers.
- To bury our parents and husbands.
- To walk with my family as far into the mountains as I can.

[Exit Women.]

SLIDE PAIR 69

ZZ. It was 1972.

AA. Look at this. 11,000 rounds of heavy NVA artillery have fallen on Long Cheng in the past four months.

BB. You're counting?

AA. There are about 30 days in a month. That's 120 days. Every day has 24 hours. That's 2,880 hours. Divided into 11,000 rounds is . . . 3.8--almost four shells an hour for four months. How much do you think it's costing them?

BB. I don't care. But if something doesn't happen soon, the communists are going to be all around us, and nothing will be able to get in or out.

XX. He's right. We're trapped here in Long Cheng, but more people are coming in from the mountains every day. It's because the American President is a Chinese.

YY. THAT'S STUPID! How can the American President be a Chinese?

XX. It's true. Look. Here's a picture of him in China.

SLIDE PAIR 70

I got it from a magazine.

YY. But he's not a Chinese. Look how big his nose is!

ZZ. Richard Nixon made history by normalizing relations with China. Things didn't look good for us.

SLIDE PAIR 71

Then Henry Kissinger came to inform Laos that all aid from America would be completely stopped as soon as a peace agreement was made with North Vietnam. Again, Laotian statesmen went to work.

SLIDE PAIR 72

A delegation including Dr. Yang Dao, the first Hmong to go abroad to the

university, met with the Chinese in Beijing and the Soviets in Moscow. They laid out plans for rebuilding the country, creating industry, strengthening education, building an infrastructure of hospitals, schools, and transportation. The Chinese and Soviets talked about the need to exterminate the Hmong people and any others who had fought the communists.

AA. We were speaking to the wind. Even the Americans didn't hear us any more.

XX. What Americans? I'm getting out. There's some of my family in Thailand.

YY. They'll shoot you when you cross the Mekong!

XX. Not if I'm lucky and drown first.

[Exit XX and YY.]

AA. I hate to say it, but those guys have got a good idea. As soon as the fighting stops in Vietnam, every communist with a gun is coming to Long Cheng.

BB. Are you talking about moving half a million people?

AA. We've done it before.

BB. [Whistles.] AMAZING! Tell me how we're going to do it.

[Exit AA and BB.]

The End of Long Cheng

SLIDE PAIR 73

ZZ. The end of all hope came swiftly. The politicians formed a new coalition government, but the communists kept up the fighting in the provinces. Hmong who had become an part of the Laotian government were removed. And Vang Pao's hands were tied in the field. He had been fighting to keep Lao united; but now he couldn't even defend his own people. If he stayed in Long Cheng, it would be suicide.

[Enter AA and BB.]

SLIDE PAIR 74

BB. I told you: he's on the radio with the Americans in Bangkok right now. I think he can get a big plane in here.

AA. They'll get Vang Pao out and maybe how many more?

BB. A hundred. A thousand. It depends on the planes.

AA. How many cars can we get? Trucks?

BB. They'll be blown up before they hit the road to Vientienne--that's the only bridge.

AA. Okay. So let's get the pilots out. Officers and trained soldiers, anybody in the army willing to go. They can regroup on the other side if we get them to the American base in Bangkok. Are the Thai going to help?

BB. I don't know. I haven't heard anything.

[Exit AA and BB.]

ZZ. Before we knew what had happened, Vang Pao was gone. It was 1975 when he was given political asylum in the U.S. Most of us thought the army had gone to Thailand or to America to rebuild and train. We thought that they would come back and liberate Lao from the communists.

CC. Where is the army? The communists are killing us by the hundreds. The people are frightened. Where should they go?

ZZ. Mass migrations of Hmong began. Some fled to the mountains for safety, but large groups were rounded up to be sent to re-education camps. Few would survive that ordeal. A large pocket of Hmong resistance remained around Phu Bia mountain. It seemed isolated from Lao and Vietnam and the war. It was the kind of place that the Hmong had always been able to find when they needed refuge. But then came the yellow rain.

SLIDE PAIR 75

- The yellow rain.
 - Sometimes red.
 - Sometimes blue.
 - We heard the helicopters coming--large Soviet gunships appeared over the trees and dropped the colored mist on the forests.
 - The yellow rain.
 - Sometimes red.
 - Sometimes blue.
 - Chemicals that covered the leaves and water.
 - Birds fell dead from the trees.
 - Animals gasped for breath.
 - From the yellow rain.
 - Sometimes red.
 - Sometimes blue.
 - Children and old people coughed blood.
 - And died.
 - Mothers poisoned their babies with their own milk.
 - And they died.
 - Sometimes the rain would make the skin peel away from the muscle.
 - People went crazy.
 - And died.
 - From the yellow rain.
 - Sometimes red.
 - Sometimes blue.
- ZZ. Between forty five and fifty thousand Hmong were dead within months in the Phu Bia region. The communists reported that the area had been "pacified." Elsewhere, napalm was dropped on crops just before harvest. Thousands of Hmong were left to starve. The extermination continued. And tens of

thousands of weakened Hmong fled to the Mekong River, running a gauntlet of Pathet Lao bullets, chemical weapons, landmines, fatigue and disease.

Crossing the Mekong: A Dance and a Poem

SLIDE PAIR 76

YY. My friend was not lucky. He did not drown in the Mekong. His name was _____, and he had a great heart. We gathered our families and travelled fifteen days to the river.

- One grandmother took the opium and stayed behind.
- Another died on the path.
- We hid in the rocks and jungle.
- We drugged the children to keep them quiet.
- We wrapped our bleeding feet.
- We ate leaves from along the trail.
- We made no fires.

YY. We did everything right.

- Some of the mothers stopped giving milk.
- Two babies died quietly; and we left them without a burial.
- We carried the children for the last days.
- My father walked away one night while we were sleeping. I think he went away to die.
- To keep my baby from crying, I stopped her mouth with an opium rag and didn't know when she had died.
- In sight of the river, the communists found us. They lobbed mortar shells.
- The last thing I ever saw of my sister was her legs flying through the air toward Thailand. Just her legs.

YY. The bodies were all around--in pieces. And the communist soldiers came and shot at the pieces. My friend took out his M-16 and shot three of the soldiers. I fired my own gun, and the rest of the soldiers ran back to the trees. My friend stood for a moment. His head was gone; and the blood arched from his shoulders a meter high. He stood. And then he fell. That night, I swam the river alone.

- How can a river divide life from death?

ZZ. Of those who attempted to flee Laos into Thailand, less than a third would survive. 40,000 would reach Thailand in 1975 alone. The refugee stream continued. It continues even now.

The Hmong in Storage

SLIDE PAIR 77

[ENTER AA AND BB.]

AA. Have you heard anything about Touby Lyfong? Did he get out?

BB. I haven't heard. News is terrible here, but I think he's still in Vientienne or

someplace.

AA. Alive?

BB. [Shrugs] I used to think he was immortal.

AA. We need more land.

BB. I can get more rice and some tools. I can get all the cigarettes you want; but who needs them? But land . . . they've closed off the camps now. They don't want us to go into the mountains.

AA. Vang Pao? Any word?

BB. He's in America. Some are saying that he's putting the army back together with new American weapons. If he was, why are there so many of his old soldiers stuck in the camps? Why aren't the Americans getting them out?

AA. I'll talk to the Relief people when they come.

ZZ. By 1976, Thailand stopped all the Hmong who were finding refuge in Hmong areas of North Thailand, and put them in refugee camps instead. Chang Khong. Chang Kham. Ban Nam Yao. Sob Tuang, and Ban Vinai swelled to bursting with an increasing refugee population.

CC. I feel like all the Hmong have been tied up and hung to dry in this Thai attic space.

- Will we dry up and blow away?
- Will the rats and birds eat us up?
- When will Vang Pao come back with the army?
- When can we go home?

AA. The Relief people are going to relocate us.

BB. Finally. In the North? In the Mountains?

AA. Outside of Thailand. They're asking if we want to go to America or France or Australia.

BB. [Whistles.] AMAZING.

ZZ. Of the tens of thousands of Hmong in the Thai refugee camps, most decided to emigrate. Some went to France, where they would know the language, some to Australia, some to other places in Europe. But the largest number went to the United States where Vang Pao had gone. Many thought they would be part of a liberation army that would come in force to Lao. Many simply wanted freedom and rest from sickness and war. Many followed their families. Some remained in the camps because of fear of the unknown. Some remained because they had more than one wife, and the Americans wanted them to bring only one.

SLIDE PAIR 78

[The sounds of urban life, traffic, etc. are heard.]

- CC. I flew on an airplane for the first time in my life; and you know what it was like? It was like being pulled out of the world into the sky where time and life and death didn't exist. And then, we dropped from the sky to the earth again. But it wasn't the earth: it was America. It was made of concrete and

plastic and smelled like a burning field. I was frightened.

SLIDE PAIR 79

- I needed to find work to help support my sisters and aunt, but they said it was against the law for kids to work. I got a small job delivering newspapers, but they said it was against the law to use a horse or an ox to carry them inside the city. I couldn't even use a dog.
- My mother got in trouble for burning wood inside her new oven. What's an oven for?
- I was so scared of the toilet that I had bad dreams about it.
- The world is running backwards. I need my parents to teach me about life and the world. But it's me who is teaching them how to live in America. It's a hard problem.
- Do you see this nose? It's not a European nose. And my mother says it reminds her of her sister who died in Lao. Sometimes I catch my mother looking at me and seeing her sister in my face. I know her mind is back in Lao. I know she misses her family and the mountains and everything she knew. Sometimes, she is made so strange and silly and clumsy by life in America that she needs to go back to her home in spirit--to grow again, to be bright and graceful. This nose takes her home. It's a magic nose.
- My father was betrayed. He came to America as a Laotian Hmong. He came to live with General Vang Pao. He came to train for the army that would go back to Lao and win back his home and his land. He feels like he was kidnapped--that somebody decided that the Hmong had to leave their homes so the communists could live there. And so all the Hmong were stolen away and sprinkled across America to be forgotten.

SLIDE PAIR 80

- The last we heard about Touby Lyfong was that he was sent to a re-education camp. He is probably dead. He was never a king or a president. He was never a world leader. But he was one of the greatest patriots who ever lived. He gave his entire life to his country, his money to educate it's leaders, his promise to have his people treated with dignity. There will be legends of Touby Lyfong as long as the Hmong can speak and sing. And sometimes I think that maybe it wouldn't have been right for him to come to America. He stayed in Lao to keep the Hmong spirit strong there. We will hear him in the voice of the Qeng.
- And we'll know that wherever we are, we are patriots too. We are Hmong; and we are Statesmen, doctors, lawyers, teachers, scientists, farmers, policemen, family, Americans.
- I was born in the U.S.A. -- a Hmong American. This is my country; and when I think of the thousands of years of history of the Hmong people, I don't think of it as something that stopped when my parent's plane landed in California. I think of it as my gift to America, whose history just got five thousand years longer.

