

Commentary: Mis-Education in K-12 Teaching about Hmong Culture, Identity, History and Religion

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Abstract

This commentary article discusses several examples of inaccurate information about the Hmong presented in contemporary materials produced by school district staff and/or published by mainstream publishers in the United States for use with the K-12 market to teach about Hmong culture and history.

Keywords: Hmong culture, Hmong history, K-12 education, multicultural education

Introduction

In the early 1970s, a few books on the Hmong appeared;¹ including Yang Dao's work, *Les Hmong du Laos en face au développement*.² Another was Jacques Lemoine's *Un Village Hmong Vert du haut Laos* (1972).³ I also found a newsletter in the Hmong language published by Father Yves Bertrais published in this era. The limited literature related to the Hmong at this time was written in foreign languages, so Hmong students in Laos did not have the language skills to access and make use of these materials. As I myself did, Hmong students learned about the Hmong orally from their elders and by observation.

In 1979, Dianna Alexander, a friend and mentor of mine took me to the library of the University of Southern California, where we found altogether three books on the Hmong/Miao. All were authored by Christian missionary workers in China in the early 20th century. More

searching led me to discover Father Savina's book, *Histoire des Miao*, published in 1924.⁴ I also found a few papers on the Hmong of Laos by American missionary workers, including Barney's *Christianity: Innovation in Meo Culture*.⁵

The Literature on Hmong Americans began to emerge in the 1980s. Published in 1982, *The Hmong in the West*,⁶ was widely consulted by both Hmong and non-Hmong. Since this anthology was published, many additional written sources have become available to the American public. Some of these took a practical approach to Hmong culture, providing information to service providers to help them work more effectively with Hmong refugees or Hmong students. Among these was the *Handbook for Teaching Hmong Speaking Students*, published in 1988.⁷ At the same time, others were working to compile Hmong folk stories, with the efforts of Charles and Eva Johnson being the most extensive. In addition, in order to promote literacy in the Hmong American community and embrace the gradual but undeniable transition from an oral to written culture, Hmong magazines, such as *Haiv Hmoob* and others, made concerted efforts to circulate stories, poetry and opinion pieces to their readers.

Publications on Hmong and Hmong Americans, many of which are intended as teaching materials for Kindergarten to the Twelfth Grade, have grown substantially. But this body of literature also has inadvertently included information about Hmong culture, identity, history and religion that can be misleading. In my view, if steps are not taken to assess and correct this information, there is a potential for a mass mis-education of American children about the lives and background of the Hmong.⁸ I would like to bring up examples of mistakes that I have found in K-12 teaching materials and encourage discussions about responsible scholarship, especially the need to portray cultures in ways that are factual and respectful. This essay is an attempt to point out some of these inaccuracies and their potential ramifications.

Example 1: Improper representation of Hmong spiritual practice

The drawing below, found in a K-3 Social Studies Curriculum developed by staff of the Saint Paul Public Schools, does not accurately represent the important Hmong spiritual practice of *ua neeb* (shamanism).



Saint Paul Public Schools (2004). *Teacher Handbook: Embedding Hmong Culture Into the K-3 Social Studies Curriculum*.

In this sketch, the *txiv neeb* wears a black hood and sits on a bamboo bench while facing the viewer with his back to the wall. The floor of the house is made of bamboo. The shaman's empty hands rest on his legs. He appears to wear shoes with his feet on the bamboo floor. Relying on his creativity and imagination, the artist has added details that are not substantiated by the experiences of the Hmong people.

A village home did not have a bamboo floor. Hmong houses were built on the ground; the “floor is simply packed earth.”⁹ The shaman did not wear shoes as he must be able to sit or jump up and down freely. Also, in village society, only a small minority could afford shoes; most persons went bare foot. A shamanic session could last up to two or more hours; a bamboo bench is not as sturdy or comfortable as a wooden one. In Laos or the U.S. today, no *txiv neeb* has ever

used a bamboo bench. This drawing thus fails to capture and convey to students and teachers the everyday life experiences of Hmong people.

This particular drawing is included in a 3rd grade Hmong social studies curriculum for St. Paul Public Schools, so it is reasonable to assume that the information was reviewed and approved by teachers, administrators and educators. Many of these individuals might be Hmong themselves. Hmong students represent more than 30 percent of the student population of St. Paul Public Schools.¹⁰ The Twin-Cities are home to the largest concentration of Hmong Americans. If the resources used by teachers in this district contain errors that have gone undetected, then they are likely to go unnoticed elsewhere. Although this oversight is small, it should not be overlooked. Misinformation often begets stereotypes.

A Hmong *txiv neeb* does not cover his head with a hood, or sit on a bamboo bench, or wear shoes while performing. During a healing session, he covers his face with a *phuam neeb*, or veil (which can be black or red depending on the background of his or her training). This veil is held in place by a small, slender ribbon of the same color wrapped around his head just above his ears and then tied into a knot at the back of his head. Moreover, on the middle fingers of each hand is a *tswb neeb*, a donut-shape bell that jingles loudly as he trembles, shakes and moves. At crucial moments during the performance, he also may instruct his assistant to place a *txiab neeb*, or a "spirit helpers' sword"¹¹ in his hand. This tool is used to mark the divide between the living and non-living, to keep each in its place. For example, the circular loop of a *txiab neeb* is a symbolic space where the soul (*plig*) can find protection and resist the forces of fragmentation. The *txiv neeb* (shaman) imitates the riding of the horse (embodied by a wooden bench). In the book, *The Hmong*, anthropologist Robert Cooper, for example, offers this description which is more helpful than what readers can infer from the sketch above:

After throwing the horns, lighting the spirit-paper and burning three sticks of incense, the shaman, seated on the bench before the altar, with his face covered by the black veil fastened with a headband, will begin to jerk and tremble. The tremors will run through his body, and soon it will be observed that they are most violent in his feet and hands, which begin to take on a rhythm of their own until the whole body of the shaman is steadily bounding up and down upon the bench, exactly as though he were [was] cantering on a horse, while the assistant stands behind him beating the gong. These sounds, the smell of the burning incense, and the rhythmic motions of his body, all aid the shaman to enter into the trance which overtakes him [her] as his [her] helper-spirits, *dab neeb*, descend and accompany him [her] on his [her] journey into the Otherworld.¹²

The movements of a *txiv neeb* are not random, but coordinated, controlled and purposeful. During the prelude portion of the performance (the first eight to ten minutes), s/he sits facing his/her altar (which is temporary placed in front of the altar of the host family); however, later on, s/he may leave this position, guided by a knowledgeable and trusted assistant called *tus hwj sawv*. This movement is, according to Hmong beliefs, necessary to expel any negative energy (i.e. source of illness) that has build up inside the home out the front door. His assistant guides his every step to make sure that he does not trip and fall, or bump into furniture and walls.



Shaman's altar. Photo by Kou Yang, 2009

The space between the shaman and his altar is considered a sacred area; no one is allowed in this space while the performance is taking place. If a child should wander across it, her or his action will cause a *txiv neeb* to come out of his trance and end the performance prematurely. Such incidents are taken seriously by elders as bad omens.

Example 2: “Hmong” Means “Free People”¹³

In her book, *The Hmong*, Dolly Brittan writes: “The name Hmong in the Hmong language means “**free people**” (p. 5). In the last 30 years, I have spoken to hundreds of people about the meaning of “Hmong” in my visits to Hmong communities in Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and China as well as the United States, Australia, Germany and France. I have asked Hmong

elders, scholars and students to define this word, but no one has offered a satisfactory answer. Like these others, I continue to puzzle over whether a single meaning will suffice.¹⁴ Historian Mai Na Lee agrees with me when it comes to the layers of complexities built into the word ‘Hmong.’ In her article, *The Thousand-Year Myth: Construction and Characterization of Hmong*, she acknowledges that “Hmong Means Free” was “coined only in the last twenty years,” [since the 1970s] and it has since “been thoughtlessly promoted by both Hmong and non-Hmong alike.” She believes that to accept this definition is to accept “thousands of years of narrow, one-dimensional characterization of the Hmong. To historical oppressors of Hmong, ‘free’ entails primitive savageness and inability to assimilate, or to enter the fold of what these outsiders defined as civilization. To outsiders, ‘free’ also captures the essence of the warlike Hmong character, the Hmong’s inability to compromise on a peaceful, rational level.”¹⁵ Neither of these views is the accurate description of Hmong people: they do adapt; they have changed; and they continue to live side by side with others. In my view, “Hmong” does not mean “free” or “free people. Hmong is simply the name of an Asian ethnic group.

Example 3: The Khene (Qeej) Musical Instrument¹⁶

“The Khene (KEN-eh), or bamboo flute, has been used by the Hmong for more than 2,000 years. Most of the khene can be held in a person's hand. **But some are so large they must be held by two people**” (Brittan 1997: 17).



Photo by Kou Yang, 2012



In this photo, there is a large *qeej*, but it is not a very large and long instrument, requiring two people to handle. In fact, it is designed for one person, not two, to play. Cooper describes the *qeej* as a "reed pipe" with varied dimensions, but a length of 73 cm (29 inches) from the tip of the mouthpiece to the end of the windbox is normal. The inside of the mouthpiece measures 12 mm (half an inch). The mouthpiece is strengthened and protected by a ring, usually made of brass, some 2 cm (three-quarters of an inch) wide. The neck and windchest are bound with rings of silver, brass, copper or tin."¹⁷ In the photograph above, the rings are not made of silver, brass, copper or tin, but rather they are made the bark of a (birch) tree. During play, "The windchest is held with balls of both hands and the small fingers of each hand, leaving the first three fingers of each hand free to close and open the holes in the six pipes."¹⁸ Dr. Vincent Her, a Cultural Anthropologist and Qeej Master, stated that, during performances, the windchest is NOT held in the balls of the hands. The hands are positioned so that the last two fingers on each hand can curl underneath the middle digits of the instrument on either side. These two fingers support the weight of the instrument while the thumb, index and middle fingers can move freely (as shown).

The palms and wrists only come into contact with the windchest when a player moves the instrument from one side of his body to the other.¹⁹



Photo by Kou Yang, 2012

Example 3: The Terminology of Hmong, Meo or Miao²⁰

In *The Hmong of Southeast Asia*, Millet writes: “The Hmong are known by several names: Miao, meaning “young plant” or “sons of the soil”; Meo, the Chinese slang term for “cat”, a name considered offensive; and Hmong, which is what the people call themselves” (p. 4). As a person of Hmong descent I have acquired an understanding of this issue based on research abroad and personal experiences. Miao is a broad Chinese term used for several ethnic minorities that includes at least four sub-groups: A Hmao; Hmong; Hmu; and Qo Xiong.²¹ In Chinese, Miao consists of two characters “苗”. The top (艹) refers to “shoot,” or “young plant.” The bottom (田) indicates “field,” such as a rice field. For those fluent in Lao or Thai, ‘Meo’ is not the same as the word for cat. There is a slight difference in their spelling:  for Hmong; and “” for cat. In Thailand and Laos, the former is used to refer to the Hmong people. I believe that Meo is a derivation of Miao. Although the root of both may not mean “barbarian” or “cat,” they frequently have been used as ethnic slurs and their social, if not their etymological, history is complicated by stereotypes and negative stigmas.²²

Example 4: Hmong Clothing and Clan Identity

“The Hmong are divided into clans, or sub-groups. Each clan wears special clothing with unique stitchery, or embroidery. The major Hmong clans in Vietnam are the White Hmong, Blue Hmong, Black Hmong, and Flower Hmong. The Green Hmong and armband Hmong, who wear bands on their jacket sleeves, live in Thailand and Laos. The clan names reflect the main color or pattern of the women’s clothing. For example, women of the Black Hmong wear black clothing” (Millet 2002: 5). Many of the scholars of Hmong descent that I have interviewed do not support this observation. Similar errors also have been made by Barr (2005), who provides photos of two women and identifies them as Hmong women, but their costumes suggest that they are Iu-Mien, a different ethnic group in Laos. Although both Hmong and Iu-Mien belong to the Miao-Yao family of languages, they are distinct ethnic groups with vastly different histories, cultures and religions. Thus, care must be taken not to substitute one of these ethnic groups for the other.²³

“The main Hmong clans from Laos and Thailand were the Green Hmong and the Armband Hmong. The main clans from Vietnam included the White Hmong, Blue Hmong and Black Hmong, and Flower Hmong” (Barr 2005: 32). Barr makes use of another photo of a group of Hmong women who wear head pieces of various colors to support the claim that the color of Hmong clothes represents their clans.

Every Hmong person and student of Hmong Studies know that the color of Hmong clothes does not represent their clans and that White, Armband and Black are not Hmong clans, but sub-groups. There are 19 clans identified among the Hmong of Laos and Thailand: Cha or Chang (Tsab), Cheng (Cheej), Chu (Tswb), Fang (Faaj), Hang (Haam), Her (Hawj), Khang (Khaab), Kong (Koo), Kue (Kwm), Lor or Lo (Lauj), Lee or Ly (Lis), Moua (Muas), Phang (phaab), Tang (Tag), Thao (Thoj), Vang (Vaj), Vue (Vwj), Xiong (Xyooj), and Yang (Yaj).²⁴ Robert Cooper suggests that Hmong clans are “modeled on the Chinese surname groups.”²⁵ In my view, clans and sub-groups are not one and the same. In Southeast Asia, the color or style of clothes might indicate an individual’s sub-group, such as White Hmong, Black Hmong or Armband Hmong, but not her clan.²⁶

The connection between the color of Hmong clothes and a Hmong sub-group is as problematic as grouping people by their race. Yet, Cooper insists: “The easiest way to decide if

a group of Hmong belong to the Green, White or Armband category is to look at the women. Green Hmong women wear a batiked, embroidered and pleated "blue" skirt (Ntsuab refer to a range of colours from deep green to blue, "blue" to Hmong eyes is represented by the term xiav). White Hmong women wear blue trousers like their men; this might seem a little confusing but all become clear during the few days of Hmong New Year when White women dress in a plain white skirt. Women of the Armband category dress like White Hmong but add distinctive bands onto the sleeves of their jackets."²⁷ The color of a Hmong woman's clothes does not represent her clan. The only way to know which clan a Hmong woman belongs to is to ask her directly.²⁸ Indeed, it is customary for people to ask each other this question when they meet for the first time.

Example 5: The Hmong Role in the U.S. Conflict in Southeast Asia

"The U.S. Army trained Hmong soldiers in Laos during the second Indochina War" (Millet 2002: 16). Millet provided a photo of an American officer inspecting a group of soldiers to support her claim. The face of the American officer in the photo is a familiar face to students of the Vietnam War. After a quick check, I discerned that the American soldier in the included photo is Army General William Westmoreland, the Commander of the U.S. Military Operations in the Vietnam War from 1964 to 1968, when the war was at its peak.²⁹

Yet, history suggests that there were no U.S. troops in Laos, only CIA personnel and USAID workers (a few of whom served as spy agents, e.g. Edgar Buell), volunteers, health care workers, and so on. Moreover, although the soldiers pictured in Millet's book are Southeast Asian, they may not be Hmong (their physical appearance suggests that they are not). Finally, there is no way to confirm that this photograph was taken in Laos. Would it be acceptable to use a photo of Iraqi soldiers to describe events that took place in Afghanistan? Teaching materials intended for the classroom should not affirm the common stereotype that all Asians or Asian Americans look alike and should therefore be treated as having similar experiences.

Millet also writes: "The conflict crossed into Laos in the early 1960s. At this time, some Hmong groups agreed to join the **U.S. Army Special Forces**, known as the Green Berets, to fight in a secret army. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) promised that the United States would find new homes for the Hmong fighters if they lost the war" (Millet 2002: 17). No known Hmong soldier in Laos served in the U.S. Army Special Forces. To be a Green Beret requires

extensive special training. Hmong soldiers in Laos received little to no training before going onto the battlefield. I will take up the issue of the American “promise” that Millet describes below.

Example 6: A U.S. Promise to Hmong Soldiers?³⁰

Did the U.S. make a promise to Hmong? Was that the reason why thousands of Hmong refugees were allowed to come to the U.S.? Barr writes “The CIA promised to help the Hmong after the war” (Barr 2005: 12). In addition, she notes: “The secret Hmong army in Laos worked alongside the U.S. troops.” If a promise was made, it was off the record. There is no documentation to support this claim. Even the CIA agent who first contacted Major Vang Pao and other military leaders of the Royal Lao Army (FAR) has continually refuted this claim:

“We didn’t promise anything. They didn’t want to promise anything. That’s what a lot of people miss... [A]ll the Hmong wanted to do was to stay there, and wanted their freedom, they wouldn’t want anybody to bother ‘em, they wanted their own country... That’s what they were fighting for... They never dreamed of going to the U.S.... [Vang Pao said to me,] “We have to fight the Communists or we have to leave,” that’s it... It’s not like a lot of people are saying now, that they volunteered to fight for the U.S.... That’s not true.”³¹

I have personally asked Col. Bill Lair twice about this issue and his answer was "No." Many Hmong do point to the statement made by Pop (Edgar) Buell that he made a promise to the Hmong, but his connection to the CIA or U.S. government remains unclear. If his promise was made as an individual American, it cannot be counted as representative of the CIA or the U.S. government. Moreover, the CIA may not necessarily be said to represent the U.S. government. With further searching, I also found that Robbins (1987) wrote, "The French left Laos in 1954 and the Americans stepped in and paid for the salary of the Royal Lao Army (FAR), which is claimed to be the “only army in the world completely paid for by the United States.”³²

With regard to the second claim about the "secret Hmong army" in Laos, it is not quite accurate. First, the Hmong were citizens of Laos. Second, many soldiers of Hmong descent

served in a Special Guerrilla Unit (SGU) under Major General Vang Pao, a Commander of the Second Military Region (MR II) in Laos. All of the soldiers wore the uniform of the Royal Lao Army, including Major General Vang Pao, who was one of its commissioned officers.

MR II was not the only region in Laos to receive secret U.S. military assistance. Prior to 1975, Laos was divided into five Military Regions. As indicated in the map below, four of the five Military Regions had both members of the regular soldiers of the Royal Lao Army and soldiers of the Special Guerrilla Units. SGU soldiers were paid mostly by military assistance from the United States, but served under the Royal Lao Army and wore its military uniform. The territories of the Military Region I, II, III and IV included the border provinces with China and Vietnam, along with the Annamite Mountain ranges. The Ho Chi Minh Trail, the most bombarded area during the war, passed through MR III and MR IV. Not surprisingly, these military regions also received more U.S. Military funding. Only Military Region V, which included the Laotian Capital City of Vientiane, did not include Special Guerrilla Units.



Map source: Royal Lao Army (FAR) and Special Guerrilla Units (SGU) Veterans³³

The Five Military Regions (MR) in Laos were MRI (Royal Lao Armed Forces and Special Guerrilla Units, (FLAF & SGU), commanded by Major General Tiao Sayavong, MR II (RLAF & SGU) commanded by Major General Vang Pao, MR III (RLAF & SGU) commanded by Major General Nongphet Daoheuang, MR IV (RLAF & SGU) commanded by Major General Soutchay Vongsavanh, and MR V (which had only the RLAF) commanded by Major General Thonglith Chokbengboun.

If members of the SGU were part of the secret army, then would this include members of the SGU in the Military Region I (MRI), Military Region III (MR III) and Military Region IV (MR IV) (see the above map). Also, it is important to note that not all members of the SGU in MR II under the command of Major General Vang Pao were Hmong. In fact, Colonel Chao Manivong, General Vang Pao's right hand lieutenant was a Lao and a member of the Royal Family in the Kingdom of Laos.

The third issue identified in the books above involves the claim that the secret Hmong army in Laos "**worked alongside the U.S. troops.**" This claim is also wrong as there were no U.S. troops deployed in Laos. A brief discussion of the history of the secret war in Laos will serve to dismiss this claim.

The 1954 Geneva Accord³⁴ was signed and granted full independence to the three Indochinese countries by France. This agreement recognized Laos and Cambodia as neutral states, and temporarily partitioned Vietnam into two states: North and South Vietnam. North Vietnam was put under the Communist Viet Minh, and South Vietnam was handed to the non-communist Vietnamese. The partition led to large refugee movements from the North to the South, in addition to fueling the civil war in South Vietnam into the so called Vietnam War, which was a military conflict of the Cold War. The Cold War started right after World War II between the Communist countries (led by the Soviet Union) and the non-Communist countries (led by the United States). The United States supported the non-Communist Government of South Vietnam, and the Soviet Union, North Vietnam and the Communist Viet Cong (Communist National Liberation Front) in South Vietnam. Because South Vietnam was not a neutral state, both North Vietnam and the United States were able to send their troops to South Vietnam. U.S. military personnel increased over the years as the Viet Cong became stronger, and the military of the South Vietnamese government became weaker.³⁵

In early 1961, the outgoing U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower briefed John F. Kennedy, the incoming president, that Laos was "the key to Southeast Asia. If Laos fell, the United States would have to write off the whole area."³⁶ In March, President Kennedy announced that the U.S. would support Laos's sovereignty and as result U.S. secret involvement in the civil war in Laos began. To avoid violation of Laos' neutrality, the United States then surreptitiously increased military assistance (monetary funds, weapons, military supplies, etc.) to the Non-Communist government of Laos, and the Soviet Union and North Vietnam did the same to the Communist Pathet Lao. Consequently, the Vietnam War spread to Laos.³⁷ This civil war in Laos became known as the secret war because it involved the secret participation and support of both the non-Communist and Communist superpowers.³⁸ The Hmong and other ethnic groups who lived along the foothills of the Annamite Mountain Ranges and/or borders of Laos and Vietnam and China, which were the frontlines,

were pushed and pulled to become involved on both sides of the secret war.³⁹ Because of its covert involvement in the war in Laos, the United States did not send troops to Laos, but rather CIA agents, military advisors, Air America pilots, USAID workers, physicians, diplomats and others.⁴⁰

Conclusion:

The three books and curriculum materials I have chosen to discuss in this essay were published in a time span of eight years. I found the books during a visit to the classroom of a Hmong immersion program in California. What I have learned from these sources is that there is much work to be done in order to provide students with reliable information on Hmong history, culture, identity, and religion. How widespread are these inaccuracies? Are they to be found in other textbooks and teaching materials? Because these books and curriculum materials continue to be used by schools and educational programs,⁴¹ I believe that they should be subject to thorough examination. The lessons that we learn from them extend beyond the classroom to issues of cultural representation.

Only by engaging in ethical and responsible scholarship can writers, researchers and educators ensure that the information given to students in K-12 programs is accurate. My advice to educators and curriculum developers is that there are hundreds of books and articles on the Hmong people.⁴² Many of these are available online free of charge; take advantage of them. In addition, the Hmong Archives, the Hmong Resource Center Library, and the Center for Hmong Studies may be places to visit and conduct in-depth research. Finally, there are many scholars that have credible expertise on Hmong culture, identity, history, and religion. Just a few telephone calls or emails could have prevented many of the errors that I have cited in this essay. As Confucius once wrote: "A man [woman] who has committed a mistake and doesn't correct it is committing another mistake."

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Endnotes

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2. Yang Dao, *Les Hmong du Laos en face au development*. Vientiane, Laos: Siasavath Publishers (1975).
3. Lemoine, Jacques. *Un village Hmong Vert du haut Laos*. Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (1972).
4. Savina, F. M. *Histoire des Miao*. Hong Kong: Imprimerie de la Societe des Missions-Etrangeres (1924).
5. Barney, G. Linwood. *Christianity: Innovation in Meo Culture*. Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Minnesota (1957).
6. Downing, B. T., & Olney, D. P. (Eds.). *The Hmong in the West: Observations and reports*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (1982).
7. Bliatout, Bruce T., Bruce T. Downing, et al., *Handbook for teaching Hmong-speaking students*. Folsom Cordova, CA: Folsom Cordova Unified School District, Southeast Asia Community Resource Center, (1988).
8. The title, "Mis-Education in K-12 Teaching about Hmong Culture, Identity, History and Religion" is used because this paper covers only a sample of materials that are designed for educating children or K-12 teaching about the Hmong.
9. Robert Cooper (Ed), *The Hmong: a Guide to Traditional Lifestyles*. Times Editions (1998:33).
10. In 2012, Asian students represented more than 31 percent of the St. Paul Public Schools population and 90 percent of the Asian students were Hmong. Online link to view this report: <http://www.spps.org/AboutUs.html>
11. Jacques Lemoine called the *txiaj neeb* an etymologically "spirit helpers' sword," which is from the Chinese 劍 jiàn. He also suggested another name, the "magic rattle sword" and that it also has other functions, including usage as a mirror, a bridle to rein in his horse, and a sword to cut devils, there is also a net to catch souls (not the plig but various other ntsuj) that the shaman throws at them. If the iron discs around the loop form a ^ shape it

- means the souls have been caught, if it is a V shape, they have not been caught. Internet Communication with Dr. Jacques Lemoine, (20 September 2012).
12. Ibid, 130. For a documentary film on Hmong shamanic sessions, see Taggart Seigel's *The Split Horn: The Life of A Hmong Shaman in America* (2001). Online link to view: www.pbs.org/splithorn/hmong.html
13. Dolly Brittan, *The Hmong*, PowerKids Press, New York (1997).
14. Kou Yang, *Facing the 21st Century: The Challenges and Complexity in Reconstructing Hmong Identity*. Presented at the Third International Conference on Hmong Studies, Concordia University, St. Paul, MN: (April 9-11, 2010).
15. Mai Na M. Lee. "The Thousand-Year Myth: Construction and Characterization of Hmong." *Hmong Studies Journal*, Vol 2, No. 1 (1997). Online link to view: http://hmongstudies.com/HSJ-v2n1_Lee.pdf
16. Dolly Brittan, *The Hmong*, PowerKids Press, New York (1997).
17. Robert Cooper (Ed), *The Hmong: a guide to traditional lifestyles*. Times Editions (1998:84).
18. Ibid, 85.
19. Dr. Vincent Her, Internet communication (18 September 2012).
20. Sandra Millet, *The Hmong of Southeast Asia*, Lerner Publications Company, Minneapolis (2002).
21. See, for example, Nicholas Tapp, "The State of Hmong Studies (An essay on Bibliography)," in, Tapp, Nicholas, Jean Michaud, Christian Culas and Gary Yia Lee (eds), *Hmong/Miao in Asia*. Silkworm Books (2004). Also, see, Kou Yang, "Research Notes from the Field: Tracing the Path of the Ancestors – A Visit to the Hmong in China." *Hmong Studies Journal*, Vol. 6 (2005). Online link to view: <http://hmongstudies.org/YangHSJ6.pdf>
22. Kou Yang, *Facing the 21st Century: The Challenges and Complexity in the Reconstructing Hmong Identity*. Presented at the Third International Conference on Hmong Studies, Concordia University, St. Paul, MN: (April 9-11, 2010).
23. For further discussion of the Hmong and Iu-Mien, see, Lewis, Paul and Elaine Lewis, *Peoples of the Golden Triangle*. Thames and Hudson, London (1984:102 and 135).

- ²⁴. See, Ranard, Donald A. (Editor), *The Hmong: An Introduction to Their History and Culture*. Center for Applied Linguistics (2004). Link to view: <http://www.cal.org/co/hmong/hlaos.html>
- ²⁵. See, Robert Cooper (Ed), *The Hmong: a guide to traditional lifestyles*. Times Editions (1998:36).
- ²⁶. In discussing different costumes and group names, Jacques Lemoine stated: "About different costumes and group names, I call these groups "tribes". It is what they are! Dr. Jacques Lemoine, Internet Communication (20 September 2012).
- ²⁷. Ibid, 51. It should be noted here that this description may not be applicable to today's Hmong in Thailand and Laos as many younger Hmong tend to dress in modern western clothes, except during the Hmong New Year. Hmong costumes during the New Year have also changed during the last four decades. For example, a White Hmong girl might dress in Green Hmong clothes at the New Year and vice versa. To learn more about the evolution in Hmong New Year costumes, see, Kou Yang, "An Assessment of the Hmong American New Year and Its Implications for Hmong-American Culture." *Hmong Studies Journal*, Vol.8 (2007). Online link to view: <http://hmongstudies.org/KYangHSJ8.pdf>.
- ²⁸. For further discussion of Hmong clothing, see, *Hmong Art: Tradition and Change*, John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, WI (1986).
- ²⁹. See "William Westmoreland biography", Bio.True Story. Online link to view: <http://www.biography.com/people/william-westmoreland-9528510>
- ³⁰. Linda Barr, *Long Road to Freedom: Journey of the Hmong*. Red Brick Learning, Mankato, MN (2005)
- ³¹. Paul Hillmer, *People's History of The Hmong*. Minnesota Historical Society Press (2010:85), Saint Paul.
- ³². Christopher Robbins, *The Ravens*. Crown Publishers, New York (1987:99).
- ³³. Royal Lao Army (FAR) and Special Guerrilla Units (SGU) Veterans. Online link to view http://lana-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/The-Secret-War-In-Laos_w_logos_CAP_BLUE_rev7.pdf
- ³⁴. To read more about the 1954 Geneva Accords, see "Geneva Accords," Online link to view: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/genevacc.htm>
- ³⁵. For more discussion on American involvement in the Vietnam War, see, "Vietnam War," Global Security.org. Online link to view: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/vietnam.htm>

- ³⁶. Christopher Robbins, *The Ravens*. New York, NY: Crown Publishers (1987:102).
- ³⁷. Ibid, 102.
- ³⁸. See, Kou Yang, *Facing the 21st Century: The Challenges and Complexity in the Reconstructing Hmong Identity*. Presented at the Third International Conference on Hmong Studies, Concordia University, St. Paul, MN: (April 9-11, 2010).
- ³⁹. For further discussion on Hmong history and their involvement during the war years, see, Roger Warner, *Backfire*. New York: Simon and Schuster (1995); and Paul Hillmer, *A People's History of The Hmong*. Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, (2010). Also, see, Kou Yang, "Hmong Diaspora of the Post-War Period." *Asian Pacific Migration Journal* 12 (3) (2003). 271-300.
- ⁴⁰. See, for example, Roger Wagner, *Backfire*. Simon and Schuster (1995); and "Vietnam: A Television History/Cambodia and Laos (Episode 109)." Online link to view: <http://openvault.wgbh.org/catalog?q=Laos>
- ⁴¹. See, for example, *Multicultural Resource Center*, "Hmong Culture, Grades K-3." St. Paul Public Schools. Online link to view: <http://mrc.spps.org/3nov20042>
- ⁴². See, Mark Pfeifer, *Hmong-Related Works, 1996-2006: An Annotated Bibliography*, Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press (2007).