Context:
Southeast Asians in California
Volume 12, Number 91, September 1991

Folsom Cordova Unified School District
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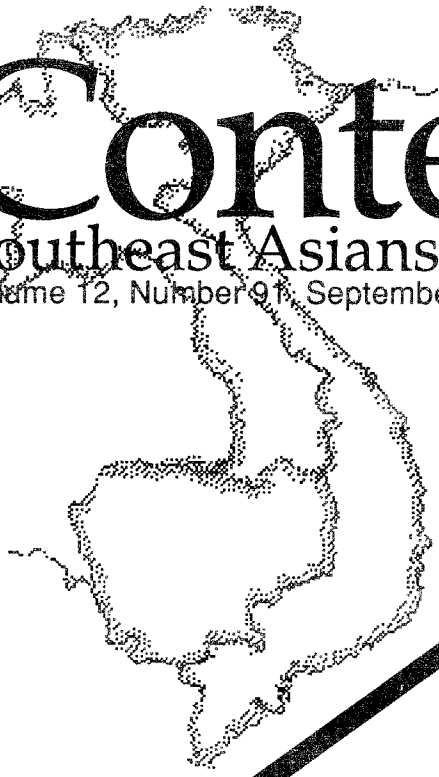


Of Cockroaches and Landlords

A tenant–manager dispute involving Southeast Asians

Julia Elliott

Julia Elliott is a graduate student in linguistics at the University of California at Berkeley. Her area of specialization is the Lua' language. Her experiences with the Lua' are similar to experiences of other groups, underlining a basic difficulty some newcomers have in finding a safe place to live. Julia relates events with insight that escape the notice of most people...

—ed.

For about two years, I have been doing linguistic field work among Lua' refugees in California. I usually have little money to pay my consultants. As part of an informal "labor exchange", I help them with various problems—making phone calls, filling out forms, driving people to appointments, and so on. In one case I played a much larger role than usual. The Lua' complained to me about problems they were having with their apartment manager and I arranged some meetings with the absentee owners.

The place

Approximately 150 Lua' are living in a medium-sized California town. About one-third of the families live in an apartment complex in a low-rent area of town. There are 20 units arranged in a two-story, L-shaped complex around an open area. The upstairs units all have balconies facing the open area, and the bottom units have porches. From porches and balconies tenants may (and do) observe much of the comings and goings of the nearby parking lot. Anyone approaching the apartments from the street or the parking lot can be seen from a long way off. The walls and ceilings between apartments are thin, and tenants can easily hear yelling, fighting and partying in other apartments.

The "yard" area—cement and wood chips—is usually occupied by children. Particularly among the non-English speaking tenants, the older children may know more about what's going on around the complex than the parents. The manager often enlists the children's help in cleaning up around the place. His apartment fronts directly on the play area and he and his girlfriend regularly monitor the children's behavior. From the porch, the manager also keeps a close eye on the parking lot.

The people

The Lua' occupy five of the twenty units. Another eight units are occupied by Mexican families. There is at least one Native American family. The manager and his girlfriend occupy one apartment. One or two units are empty. The rest are occupied by African American and Caucasian families. The main players in this story are:

Bill (manager): African American; about 6 feet tall; heavyset; 45 years old; Vietnam veteran; sympathetic at first towards the Lua', but in conflict with them for the past six months; was a tenant at the complex for two years

before becoming manager.

Donna: Bill's girlfriend; Caucasian; medium-sized; 25 years old; sometimes carries out responsibilities of the manager; has lived at the complex with Bill for about one year.

Ling Longman (owner): Taiwanese; small and slight; 45 years old; married to a Caucasian American; speaks English fluently with a marked "accent" and some non-native syntax; legal owner of the property; lives in a upper middle-class suburban area about 100 miles away.

Frank Chan (owner/property manager): Taiwanese; over six feet tall and slender; 45 years old; divorced; speaks English fluently with a very marked "accent" and marked non-native syntax; refers to himself as the "owner" (althought Ling Longman calls him the "property manager"); cousin of Ling's on his father's side (calls Ling his "sister"); very wealthy; lives with his brother's family in a very upper class residential area about 100 miles away.

George (tenant): Native American; close to six feet tall and heavyset; 35 years old; lives with two older sisters and two boys; very involved with local Indian politics; on friendly terms with Lua' and Mexican tenants; seems well-informed about activities at the complex; his apartment is directly over Bill and Donna's; hears Bill and Donna fighting at night.

Lua' (tenants): a minority group from highland Laos; native language is Lua', but many also speak Lao and some Thai (Lua' is unwritten; some of the people are literate in Lao and/or Thai, and English); generally small and slight (men are five feet two to five feet six inches tall); left Laos in 1975 and have spent five to fifteen years in Thai refugee camps before arriving in the United States; traditionally subsistence rice farmers; matrilocal; little or no access to formal education in Laos; participants in this situation speak varying degrees of English—virtually none to fairly fluent, with marked "accent" and non-native syntax.

Mexicans (tenants): most seem to speak little or no English; one nine-year old boy acts as the primary interpreter with me and at meetings; he is a reluctant and somewhat distracted interpreter; his English is fluent and "unaccented".

Julia (community activist/author of this article): Caucasian; tallish; 34 years old; native speaker of English; speaks some Lua' but no Spanish.

All the Lua' involved in this incident are adult men (This was particularly true in Laos, too, where men are responsible for trading and other interactions with the Lao.) George's two sisters came to all meetings; one of them talked as much as he did. One Mexican woman and one Caucasian woman attended the meetings with the owners.

I have noted the height and build of the participants because of the threat (and actual presence) of physical violence and intimidation. I think size is also relevant to nonverbal behavior. George, his sisters, and Bill are all big people. When they talk, their arm movements are broad and expansive. They sit on chairs with knees apart, often leaning back. In contrast, the Lua' are small people and use very little body movement when they speak. They sit close to one another (often touching), usually on the floor—or four or five men on one couch. They sit with torsos curved inward, sometimes with knees drawn up. Frank, though slender, is quite tall. At the meetings he sat alone on a couch with his arms extended across the back.

The events

I first began hearing complaints about Bill early in 1990. I was told that he and his girlfriend yell at the children all the time and won't let them play outside. He once told a six-year old Lua' boy to tell his parents that they had to move out. Bill has been observed hitting Donna on several occasions, and the police have taken him away in handcuffs more than once.

By summer the reports were getting worse. Bill extorted money from the tenants—they had to pay $25 a week for parking spaces; their visitors were charged for parking; they were charged exorbitant fees for minor repairs; he demanded all payment in cash; he refused to give receipts. He put unreasonable lim-

its on the tenants—45 minutes in the laundry room and curfews on visitors and children. He coerced them into signing forms they could not read. He threatened to evict anyone who did not comply with his rules.

People from the county rental information and mediation services confirmed that Bill's actions were inappropriate and in some cases illegal. They referred me to a lawyer at Rural Legal Assistance, an agency for low-income people. A lawyer there advised me that the tenants should write a letter to the absentee owners of the apartments. I helped them do so. They signed the letter "Lao Tenants' Association" because they were at this stage afraid to sign their own names.

The owner did not reply. After about three weeks, the Lao Tenants' Association received a letter from Bill rebutting the complaints contained in the letter.

Not long after that , I received a phone call late one Saturday night from a Lua' teenager whom I hadn't yet met. He said he was so angry at the way Bill was treating his parents that he was going over to beat him up. I sensed that the situation had become very volatile.

A couple of weeks later another family asked me to help them find another place to live. I know from experience that finding low-income housing for families with children is extremely time-consuming and frustrating. I decided that I would rather take a stab at alleviating the problems with the manager before attempting to locate other housing.

The lawyer from Rural Legal Assistance came to the complex twice to meet with me, the Lua' tenants and George. George tried unsuccessfully to involve some of the Mexican tenants in the meetings. We wrote another letter of complaint to the owners and received no response. In early November, Bill tried to unlawfully evict one of the Lua' families. Another family encountered trouble with their public housing subsidy because Bill refused to fix a broken window. I was profoundly frustrated at the inability to contact the owners. The lawyer could do no more at that point.

Not knowing what else to do, I decided to drive to the address we had for Ling Longman. I didn't know whether Ling Longman was the name of an individual or a corporation. When I arrived and discovered a house in a suburban residential area, I was somewhat taken aback—but I decided to go ahead. Ling Longman was home and we had a relatively congenial interchange. I briefly outlined the problems with the manager. She finally gave me the phone numbers for both herself and the property manager, Frank Chan. I returned home and called Frank. He agreed to come to the complex the following Sunday for a meeting with the tenants.

The meeting took place in one of the Lua' apartments. It was attended by Frank, Donna, the Lua', George and his sisters, two or three of the Mexican tenants, several other tenants, and myself. Following the meeting, Frank took George and me to lunch at a nearby fast-food restaurant. He informed us that he intended to speak with Bill by phone that evening and fire him. Two weeks later Frank and Ling came to a second meeting. (Frank had decided not to fire Bill, but to put him on a kind of probation.) Fewer tenants attended the second meeting. Bill came, without Donna.

The meetings

The owner(s) controlled who held the floor at the meetings. At the first meeting, Frank began by trying to write down each person's name and apartment number. He had trouble understanding the names and spelling them correctly, so he passed the paper around the room.

The Native Americans voiced their complaints first. Other people, reminded of what they wanted to say, spoke out, but Frank cut them off, determined to go around the room in order. It was important to him to identify each speaker with his or her apartment number. At one point, a non-Lua' tenant on one side of the room was speaking. The Lua', grouped on the other side of the room, talked quietly among themselves (possibly translating for one another). Frank held out his hand to them and said, "When we have a meeting I don't want anyone else talking. You have to listen. Maybe their problems are your problems." After hearing a number of similar complaints, he silenced new speakers saying that he'd already heard that and did they have anything new to add. Thus,

many of the tenants were unable to air their individual grievances.

No questions were addressed to me. When I had the floor, it was because I demanded it, either by interrupting or by stepping in to respond to a question or a comment addressed to the tenants. In other cases, I rephrased the tenants' comments to the manager.

The second meeting proceeded in a similar way. However, the conversations I had had with the owners before the meeting, and the fact that most of the non-Lua' who had said they would attend but failed to show up left me feeling angry and upset. One several occasions I took the floor by interrupting the owners or the manager. Usually I did this to ensure that the tenants were fairly represented, especially when translation needed clarification.

One interchange involved a Mexican tenant who, according to the manager, had refused the most recent cockroach spraying. The owner made a note and moved on. I interrupted to say that I thought the Mexican tenant—who understood no English—had a right to know what had been said about him. I walked over to the nine-year old translator, and stood close to him while he told the man what had been said and relayed his answer. The tenant said that he had prepared his apartment, and waited for the exterminators, who had never shown up. During the ensuing discussion, I had to continually stop the flow of talk after each turn so the young boy could translate. None of the adult speakers made space for this to happen and the young translator was not capable of taking control of the floor from the adults.

I also raised other issues that the tenants were hesitant to bring up, primarily about Bill's attitude toward them. I spoke very plainly when I felt the owners were missing the point. For example: "The reason the tenants have stopped asking the manager to fix things for them is that he says, 'F*** you, I don't care!'"

At the second meeting the owners addressed some questions directly to me, asking if I thought decisions were appropriate. I negotiated the terms of the parking regulations and rent increase. Ling asked most of the questions. Frank and Ling spoke to one another in Chinese.

I became increasingly angry as it became apparent that the tenants were unable to express their most serious complaints. The manager's side of the story generally prevailed and tenants were put in the position of defending themselves against his accusations. When the manager made a statement (frequently false) about a tenant's behavior, the owner demanded an explanation from the tenant. When a tenant did make a complaint against Bill, the owners did not ask him for a response. The owners responded to the tenants' complaints by establishing new rules. The owners did not respond in any way to the underlying complaint about Bill's autocratic behavior. George made one final attempt to get through to the owners by saying that he felt it was important that they know "what kind of person" they had hired as manager. His comment was ignored.

After the meeting, I sat on the couch talking to Ling. I said that if the tenants should write to her with complaints, we would like a response from her in writing. I pointed out that we had first written to her over six months ago. She responded that she had sent the letter to the manager, and he had responded (she pointed to a copy of his letter). I said that we wanted a response from the person we complained *to*, not the person we complained *about*. She finally said, "Maybe you do business differently than we do." She patted me on the arm told me I was too involved. She said she admired me, that she too spent a lot of time helping other people.

I was very disillusioned. I did not feel that the tenants' complaints had been adequately addressed. George and the Lua' agreed. One Lua' man said he thought the owner really talked to them like they were "low." I had also found Frank and Ling to be very patronizing. To the Lua' (never to the Native American or African American tenants), they continually said, "We have to teach you, educate you." To me, Ling kept saying, "You're young. You're too emotionally involved."

The nature of talk

When the Lua' tell me their troubles—usually in the course of our linguistic work—I try to listen with an open mind. I am not usually clear at the outset whether or not they expect me to take any action. I listen with the aim of finding out what they want from me. I ask questions in order to clarify events: "What did you say to him?"; "Did you give him the thirty dollars?"; and so on. When I have the gist of the story, I usually give my opinion: "He's got no right to do that"; "It's against the law." Or I may give advice: "You don't have to pay him to fix your stove"; "You shouldn't sign papers you don't understand."

The complaints are generally expressed in a very repetitive manner. Several individuals may elaborate on one story, or they may each describe different incidents to illustrate the same basic problem. Frequently, when all have spoken, highlights of the stories will be repeated—either by the original speaker or by someone else. At this time, solutions to the problem may be explored, some more realistic than others: "Sometimes I want to kill that guy"; "I just want to move away from this place"; "Can you write a letter for me?"

Typical of the phrases that reoccur throughout the complaints about Bill are: "He don't do nothing; don't take care nothing"; "He don't care about us"; "He talk strong to me"; "I think Bill not good manager." In the course of doing field work, I have had the opportunity to listen to people complain about other matters as well, particularly difficult spouses or recalcitrant teenaged children. A very common phrase which occurs over and over in any complaint about another person is: "I don't know with him (her)." This is a direct translation from the Lua' and means something like: I don't understand him (her); I don't know why he (she) does that; I don't know what to do about him (her). The phrase "I don't know" is in general a constantly recurring discourse marker when problematic experiences are related.

Of all the expressions of dissatisfaction with Bill's performance, the most culturally significant from the Lua' point of view is "He don't take care nothing." To *take care* in Lua' culture is to be responsible for someone, to fulfill one's duty to another person. In their matrilocal society, the husband is expected to "take care" his wife's parents. For newly arrived refugees, this means driving them to doctor's appointments, filling out forms for them, and just generally helping them to negotiate the system in addition to ensuring that they have food, clothing and shelter. To say that Bill doesn't "take care" anything in the apartments means not only that he does not attend to repairs, but also that he is generally unhelpful and disrespectful. He is not fulfilling his role as manager.

In the first meeting, Frank asked what a good manager should do; a middle-aged Lua' man replied: "I think the manager information for us; I don't know to call (repair people). His job is to give all the convenience and help."

There is no question in my mind that Bill is a very incompetent apartment manager and does not fulfill even his most basic responsibilities. Nonetheless, there may be some culture-based disagreements about the scope of his duties. One time the tenants complained to the owners in writing that "Bill charged $19 just to flip the circuit breakers when the electricity went out." Bill responded (also in writing) that he "never in the past or present charged a $19 fee for turning or flipping a circuit breaker for any of them. If this is the case why didn't they just flip the breaker? I am not their parent or guardian angel." The Lua' told me that they didn't try to deal with the breakers themselves because they were afraid they might start a fire or cause some other problem for which they would then be held responsible.

Frank's discourse with me was also very repetitive, but the themes were entirely different. At the lunch at with Frank he told us in great detail just how rich he was: his teenaged daughters had spent $4,000 the day before at the mall; he'd paid "one-point-three-seven" for a fancy house and $300,000 fixing it up; he owned 37 apartment buildings, seven businesses, and two condos in Hawaii; he'd borrowed his daughter's BMW for the drive up since he was afraid to bring his Mercedes (because of the "bad neighborhood"). He talked

about his family's wealthy dynasty in Taiwan, his ex-wives and girlfriends, his dining habits—repeating several times "I'm a real businessman." His talk was meant to demonstrate to us who was in charge, who had the power. Indeed, in a later phone call, he said to me: "they will realize the manager is nothing, the owner is control." Frank had great difficulty understanding my involvement in the tenant–manager problems. He kept asking me what I was getting out of it.

Ling's approach was very different from Frank's. When I first arrived at her door, unannounced and a stranger, she was understandably reserved and somewhat suspicious. She did not invite me into her home; we stood talking on the stoop. When I began to detail some of the tenants' complaints about Bill, she responded defensively: the manager said they were dirty, didn't keep up their apartments, and so on. She tried to understand my involvement. She finally seemed to get the idea that I was just trying to help out. "I think you have a big heart," she kept saying, "You really help these people from your heart. I really admire you." Whereas Frank had gone into great detail about his finances, Ling emphasized her work schedule: I was lucky to find her at home because she just happened to be on vacation; she usually works seven days a week; she has four offices; and so on. She told me that despite her busy schedule, she still finds time to "help her people." She continually patted me on the arm, repeating that she liked me and admired me and thought I had a big heart. Her admiration became especially effusive whenever I countered all her replies to a complaint. For example:

Julia: Another thing the tenants are upset about is that Bill has tried to establish curfews—telling people they can't have visitors after certain hours. He's got no right to do that.

Ling: His job is to control the noise—and tell people if they're bothering other tenants or playing music loud.

Julia: There's no noise. I'm not talking about a party or anything. I just mean that someone comes to visit at say ten at night and Bill tells them to leave.

Ling: They're not making any noise?

Julia: No, not at all—just walking up the stairs to the apartment.

Ling: Then how does Bill know they're there?

Julia: He knows because he stands at his window and watches people.

Ling: (patting me on the arm) Well, I can see you really help these people from your heart. I admire you.....

I interpreted Ling's behavior as an attempt to establish solidarity with me. I found it patronizing, and felt it undermined my ability to act as an advocate for the tenants. I realized I was a mediator, but I did not pretend to take a neutral position. I made it clear to everyone that I was on the tenants' side.

Cockroaches

My statements to Ling about the tenants' complaints of extortion and autocratic rules were met by counter-complaints about the personal habits of the Lua' tenants. Ling said that Bill had told her that the people are really dirty and don't take care of their apartments and that's why they have cockroaches.

I argued that that was not the case, that cockroaches are a fact of life in high density urban housing. She said, "I don't have cockroaches in my house." (I did not point out the obvious: she lived in a single family suburban home.) Ling continued, "We take off our shoes in the house." I reported that the Lua' certainly did the same. Her response to that was: "But they don't wear shoes outside." I gave up arguing with her. When talking to either Ling or Frank, I have attempted to sever the connection between cockroaches and character by reminding them that when I lived in apartment buildings in the city, I too had to contend with cockroaches. I add that now I live in the country, and while I'm not the greatest housekeeper, I don't have any cockroaches. I have crickets, spiders, ants—but no cockroaches.

It seems to me that to the older Lua', cockroaches are a nuisance, but they carry no more social meaning than crickets or ants or spiders. The younger people who have heard "cockroach discourse" among

Americans seem to be more aware of the social meaning attached to them. A 24-year old man who has been in this country about three years asked me where cockroaches came from originally. I told him I had no idea. He said he heard some people say that there weren't any cockroaches in America before 1975 (i.e., before the arrival of Indochinese refugees).

In discussions with landlords and managers about tenants' problems, it seems that the discussion always ends up on the topic of cockroaches. Managers invariably argue that cockroaches are evidence of tenants' poor cleaning practices. The implication is that people who have cockroaches are not only dirty, but also lazy, lower class, and possibly even stupid.

The managers I have dealt with seem to believe that the Indochinese cultures and characteristics are the source of their problems. They have cockroaches because of their peculiarly Indochinese habits: they eat on the floor; they keep rice on the counter in these "funny little baskets"; they don't know how to behave in a "real" house. Another often repeated belief is that their electric stoves are always burning out because they cook on too-high heat. The volume of cooking is usually blamed on their having too many people living in the house.

For the landlords and managers, then, cockroaches are a metaphor for "otherness." The complaint is about bugs, on the surface, but the underlying message is that these people are different. When tenants' housekeeping habits do not differ in overtly culturally-defined ways from those of the landlord, the landlord is less likely to blame the existence of cockroaches on specific tenant behaviors.

Cultural expectations

One recurring theme in both Frank and Ling's talk to the Lua' was the notion of educating them. "Let me give you some idea; I educate you; I have to educate you; I have to teach you." At no time did either Frank or Ling suggest that they needed to educate the African American, Caucasian, and Native American tenants when they complained. (The Mexican tenants who came to the meetings did not offer complaints, so they were never directly addressed.)

I believe that the Lua' expected to tell their complaints to the owners in much the same way as they had told them to me. Their attempts were cut short as being too repetitive. The owners just wanted to "fix" everything quickly. The tenants' complaints were of generally three types:

He's not doing his job—refusing to repair things

He's breaking the law—extorting money from tenants

He's mistreating the tenants—abusive language; autocratic rules

The owners were interested in only the first and second types of complaints. They ignored or deflected the complaints about Bill's attitude and treatment of the tenants. Despite the seriousness of the first two types of complaint, the Lua' seemed most upset by the third. A manager who was negligent but not abusive or autocratic would be more tolerable.

The Lua' wanted to hear the owners say that Bill was wrong. George overheard the owners speaking harshly to Bill outside the apartment before and after the second meeting, but Bill was never admonished in front of the tenants.

The owners did, however, repeatedly admonish the tenants about their behavior—with the intent of educating them. Tenants said that stoves, disposals, screens were left unrepaired. The owners focused not on Bill's negligence to repair, but instead on the cause of the breakdown. Ling kept asking: "Why did it break down?" She blamed the stove problems on the tenants' cooking habits, specifically those of the Lua'. A Lua' tenant complained about a window that had been broken for six months; Ling wanted to find out who broke it (a child from a neighboring complex). She demanded a police report as proof. Another tenant complained about his falling ceiling—the upstairs apartment had a leaky toilet. Ling admonished the tenant for not telling Bill about it earlier.

It seems possible that the problems of airing grievances were at least partly due to a mismatch of culturally-defined expectations. In Laos, the Lua' brought problems

to the "khensan" (village elders). In arbitration, the khensan's role is to decide "who talk good and bad" (who is telling the truth), and "who is correct with the law." If the khensan decide that one party has been wronged by another, they determine some sort of restitution. The restitution is public acknowledgment of right and wrong.

The owners performed poorly as khensan. They did not attend to the matter of who was telling the truth, even when faced with blatant contradictions. There was no public acknowledgment of Bill's wrongdoing. The tenants presented testimony of Bill's poor performance as manager; they wanted him fired. The owners did not accept their testimony as evidence, but instead demanded different kinds of proof that the tenants could not provide. The tenants were left with the conclusion that the owners thought that they were the ones who were lying.

Epilogue

I have not spoken to either Frank or Ling since the second meeting. As of five months later, most of the Lua' tenants still live at the apartment building, as do Bill and Donna. From the Lua' point of view, the situation remains unresolved as long as there is no public acknowledgment that Bill was wrong. Their first encounter with protesting unfair treatment through a meet-and-confer process has taught them that they have little power to determine a just outcome.

Satisfaction in Culture 1 Equals Satisfaction in Culture 2

by Jackie Cato,
Yuba College (ESL Dept) & Yuba City High School (Foreign Language Dept),
February 1991

There is encouraging news in recent research concerning the future of the Southeast Asians in the United States. I recently researched motivational variables of acculturation. Before I began, I believed that dissatisfaction with one's native homeland and culture would promote a more positive attitude towards acculturation and satisfaction in the new culture. I found that just the opposite is true. The more one is content in his home culture, the more likely he is to feel a belonging and satisfaction with the new culture. This, I feel, is the basis of biculturalism.

In my research, I surveyed 119 ESL students throughout Northern California community colleges. Some 65% were originally from Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand. The survey items were scaled on a Likert format (1 to 5), with "1" being extremely favorable, and "5" being extremely unfavorable. The responses were analyzed with the CYBER 170, and analyses were run with the SPSS Version 9 Statistical Package.

The survey results revealed a highly significant correlation between satisfaction with the home culture and satisfaction with the new culture.

The Southeast Asian refugees, then, bring with them a great strength that increases the likelihood of a successful bicultural life-style in the United States. They did not leave their countries because of dissatisfaction, but because of persecution. They continue to hold dear their language, culture, and country. This cultural pride transfers to satisfaction with this new, often contradicting, culture. We, as educators, increase their chances for success when we regard their home languages and cultures with admiration, encouraging them to know two languages and cultures well, rather than discarding one for another.

For further information, see "Motivational Variables of Acculturation: A Study Involving English-as-a-Second-Language Students in Community Colleges" (California State University, Chico, J. Cato, 1988).

Sovereignty and Rebellion: The White Hmong of Northern Thailand

1989 Nicholas Tapp
Singapore: Oxford University Press

Nicholas Tapp has produced a "microstudy of certain aspects of the White Hmong culture, in particular geomancy, messianism, and literacy." He says that this is not a basic ethnography, as "adequate ethnographies already exist (Lemoine 1972; Geddes 1976)." That may be—but Lemoine's study of the Green Hmong of Laos is in French, and Geddes' classic is on the White Hmong of Thailand in the late 1950's and early 1960's. Cooper has produced several studies on the Hmong of Thailand as well, mostly concerned with the question of why Hmong move so much and why they grow opium.

Tapp uses a series of translated legends to put forward his thesis, developed over many years' association with the Hmong of Laos and Thailand, including eighteen months' stay in the Hapo/Nomya village complex some 80 kilometers from Chiang Mai, Thailand, and visits to Hmong settlements in the United States. The focus of his study is how the Hmong have managed to maintain a strong sense of ethnic integrity despite centuries of oppression by more powerful majority populations.

One observation that he makes as part of the overall thesis is that as a minority group throughout time, the Hmong, like other minority groups, have defined themselves in terms of "not having" characteristics of the group holding the power. For example, a common theme of legends is that the Hmong have no Emperor, have no writing, have no land—but that at one time in the past they did have all those things. At various times, conflicts with the powerful "other"—generally pressures to assimilate or take control of territory—resulted in a re-assertion of ethnic identity, stated in deficit terms. Thus, the conflict with the Chinese, in actual history as well as in retold history, is one of the reasons for the continuation of Hmong ethnic identity for more than 4,000 years.

Tapp's special interest is geomancy—the art of locating an auspicious burial site—and the occurence of messiah figures (saviors) throughout history. Geomancy is a cultural practice that joins Hmong to the wider Chinese society, but at the same time, differences in mortuary custom identify *Hmong tiag tiag* (real Hmong) from *Hmong Suav* (Chinese Hmong).

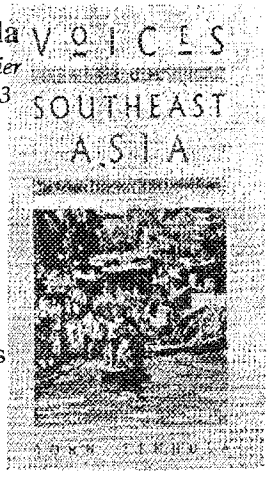
There's a wealth of insight in this volume, although the sentences are long and complex. His observations about the difference between *minority groups* and *ethnic groups*, in terms of identity, is intriguing.

Nicholas Tapp is a lecturer in the Department of Anthropology, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (and also the secretary of the International Association of Yao [Mien] Studies.)

London: Osprey Publishing Co., 1989. One of the "men-at-arms" series—also #104, #143 Vietnam War Armies, and #209 War in Cambodia.

Voices from Southeast Asia

1990 John Tehnula
New York: Holmes & Meier
30 Irving Place, NY 10003
(212) 254-4100
$29.95



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- **Traditional Chinese Celebrations**—Four important Chinese celebrations: The Lantern, Tomb Sweeping, Dragon Boat, and Moon Festival. Encourages recognition of similarities and differences between American and Chinese (Taiwanese) cultural traditions. K-8, 32 pages, 16 slides, $19.95.
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- **Mapping Latin America**—Seven self-contained interactive lessons. Grades 6-9, 59 pages, $12.95.
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- **Free to Choose: A Teacher's Guide to Revolution and Reform in Eastern Europe**—Resource with 13 pages of activity suggestions to help integrate Eastern Europe—past and present—into the world history, US history, economics, government or civics course. Topics include: nationalism, democratization; reform; capitalism; communism. Handouts include maps, a glossary, a chronology, cartoons, bibliography. Grades 9-12, 30 pages, $7.95.
- **U.S.–Soviet Relations: From the Origins to Recognition**—Relations between the two countries in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Role-playing about official recognition, comparison of capitalism, socialism, and communism; reading primary source documents. This is part I. Grades 9-14, 90 pages, $17.95.
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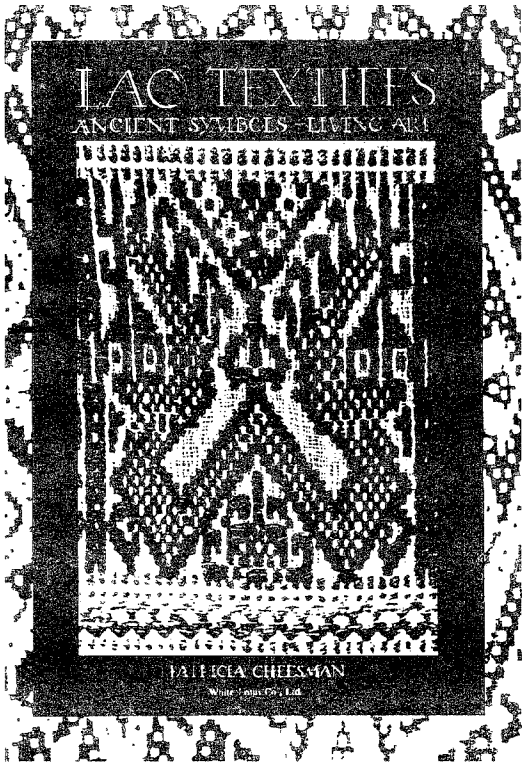
- **BAGEP Theme Guides**—Guides to international and cross-cultural education topics that are adaptable to a wide range of situations and grade levels. There are four themes, and for each one several goals were chosen. Then activities were collected to fit each goal at different grade levels (K-3, 4-6, 7-8, 9-

12). Each guide includes rationale, goals, activities, sample lesson plans, and resource lists. The four themes are

- **Language**—Awareness of silent, symbolic, oral, and written language. Relationship between language and culture. Promotes foreign language study. $12.50.
- **Understanding Our Cultural Diversity**—Acceptance and appreciation of different ethnic backgrounds. Clarifies how diversity contributes to American life and helps one to deal effectively with world issues. $12.50.
- **World Cultures**—Studies and compares cultures in a way that helps to develop understanding of beliefs, customs, social structures, and the arts. Helps students see themselves and others from many points of view. $12.50.
- **World Literature**—Literature (in translation) from both written and oral sources to examine universal themes. $12.50.
- **Heelotia: A Cross-Cultural Simulation**—In this simulated cultural exchange, students are divided into two "cultures" to gain firsthand experience in the formulation of stereotypes, perceptions and misperceptions. Easy to use, this sets an important context for exploring cultures in one's local community as well as in other parts of the world. This revised anniversary edition includes improved teacher and student instructions and all necessary game pieces. Grades 7-12, 16 pages, $7.95.



Lao Textiles: Ancient Symbols–Living Art. 1988, Patricia Cheesman. Bangkok: White Lotus Co., Ltd. (POBox 1141, Bangkok, Thailand).

Also:
Costume and Culture: Vanishing Textiles of some of the Tai Groups in Laos. 1990, Patricia Naenna, Chiang Mai, Thailand: Studio Naenna Co., Ltd. (188 Soi 9, Nimmanhaemind Road, Chiang Mai, Thailand 50000.)

In a Little Kingdom. 1990, Peggy Stieglitz. New York: M. E. Sharpe.

The plant from which the indigo dye is made (*Indigofera tinctoria*).

Lao Textiles, page 60-61

From Angkor to America

The Cambodian Dance and Music Project of Van Nuys, California, 1984-1990
37-minute video by Amy Catlin

This video is narrated by Miss Pinthang Ouk, 15-year-old Khmer dance student, who tells the story of her family's connection to the classical dance, beginning with her great-grandmother's training in the Royal Palace, and culminating in her 10-month- old niece who dances with classically derived movements at the end of the tape.

Distributor: Apsara Media for Intercultural Education, 13659 Victory Blvd. Suite 577, Van Nuys CA 91401. $50.00.

Drawing by a Khmer art student, Phnom Penh, 1990 (Thanks to Alice Lucas, San Francisco)

Xyoo 1990, peb muaj ib tug kwv tij Hmoob nyob Asmeliskas teb tau rov qab mus xyuas kwv xyuas tij nyob Los Tsuas teb. Nws hnav ris tsho "koos ples" thiab coj "kas las vav", ris rawv lub koob thaij duab, hais lus khov kho thiab coj tus yam ntxwv zoo li ib tug neeg muaj nyiaj heev. Nws cov kwv tij hnav khaub khaub hlab, khau tsis muaj rau, kiav nplawg ntia tuaj ntsib nws. Leej twg los xav hnov thaib xav paub txog Asmeliskas.

Thaum peb tus kwv tij Hmoob tab tom nrog nws cov kwv tij sib tham, txawm muaj ib tug neeg tawv dawb, xim xoos zoo li neeg Aas Kiv los neeg Asmeliskas, tuaj tshwm ntawm ntug zos. Dev tom zom zaws, me nyuam yaus khiav ntsuag qees mus saib tus yawg "caj ntswm ntev". Tus hau zos pom thiaj taug kev mus ntsib luag. Koj piav tes, kuv piav taw. Ib tug hais ib tug tsis paub. Tus hau zos thiaj hu peb tus kwv tij Hmoob nyob Asmeliskas los:

—Me tub, koj yog tus mus kawm txawj kawm ntse nyob Miv Kas los, koj sim pab nug saib tus niag yeeb ncuab ntawd xav tau dab tsi?

Peb tus kwv tij Hmoob ntseg muag liab liab thiaj lees hais tias:

—Txiv hlob, hais tseeb rau koj paub: kuv tsis paub lus Asmeliskas. Xyov niag "Daj Hau" ntawd hais dab tsi, kuv tsis nyiam to taub ib nyuag qhov hlo li.

Tus hau zos xav tsis thoob thiaj hais ntxiv:

—Me tub, ua li cas koj mus nyob Asmeliskas teb tau 10 xyoo, ntshai koj tsis tau nstib dua ib tug Miv Kas hlo li pauj!"

Tus hau zos thiaj mam nrhiav ib tug me nyuam tub hluas Hmoob hauv zos los pab txhais lus Asmeliskas. Peb tus kwv tij Hmoob Asmeliskas txaj txaj muag, tsis kam pw hauv zos, thiaj rov qab los rau Vees Cam lawm.

Cov kwv tij Hmoob Asmeliskas, nej tuaj nyob luag teb luag chaw, nej tsis kawm tiag, nyob tsam lwm hnub nej yuav mus thov cov kwv tij Hmoob Nplog pab nej txhais lus Aas Kiv mog!

—Xeev Nto

Haiv Hmoob 6(2): 24

What can a teacher do?

If the student is **literate** is the primary language, then:

- make sure the student has a dictionary.
- make liberal use of a cassette recorder, provide earphones.
- mark the key words in each lesson.
- provide an outline of the main ideas.
- find a compatible (well-liked) student to be his "buddy".
- provide basic word lists (the Dolch, the "High Utility" 500, etc.) to be learned to the point of automatic recognition.
- provide picture cards for learning pronouns, spatial relation words, verbs, adjectives.
- pair adjectives in opposites whenever possible.
- group concepts in classes when possible (vegetables, etc.)

Imagine that you are

in a classroom in which everyone speaks Hmong. Lessons are conducted in Hmong, but and you understand and read only English. There is no special bilingual aide to come help you, and the teacher does not have time to give you individual attention. You do have, fortunately, a Hmong-English, English-Hmong dictionary, and the letters of the Hmong words are ones that you already know. Your assigned reading is on the left.

What can you do to begin to understand?

- Look through the passage. Look for the words that reappear again and again. Write them on a piece of paper.
- Look for capitalized words in the middle of sentences (fortunately, this Hmong text has adopted English conventions of word spacing, capitalization, punctuation, etc.). Write those words down on the paper, too.
- Look for boldface words, italicized words, or words underlined by the teacher as key words. Write those down on the paper as well.
- Ask your neighbor to read the passage aloud into your cassette recorder (brought from home, with earphones). Listen to the tape as you try to follow the written text with your eyes. Notice that the final letters don't seem to represent a sound as they do in English. Notice also that some of the letters seem to have sounds similar to English. Notice that some sounds are very unusual. Notice that the cadence and rhythm of the sentences are unusual. Listen to the tape several times. Finally listen without looking at the text. See if you can differentiate any of the sounds from the onslaught of unfamiliar sounds. Write down those words you recognize.
- Look up the definitions of the words you wrote on the page. Write out a simple English definition. Nudge your neighbor; point to the English words,

and make a questioning gesture (shoulders up, hands shoulder height, palms up, quizzical face). Or do the same with the teacher. Try for feedback on whether the English words you wrote make any sense.

- If the dictionary has a sample phrase or sentence, write that down, too.

- Ask you neighbor to pronounce the Hmong words from your paper into the tape. Listen many times, looking at the word, trying ot figure out which letter represents which sound (fortunately, you're familiar with the basic principles of encoding and blending).

- Copy the Hmong words over and over, saying them to yourself each time, and trying to remember the English meaning (Fortunately, Hmong words use the roman alphabet; if it was Lao, Cambodian, Russian, or Chinese, the first step would be to watch your neighbor write a character, then copy it over and over. Making the characters automatically would take a lot of practice. Then, if it is a language in which each character represents a sound, you'll have to learn the sound each represents. Chinese is another story altogether.)

- Now you want to test yourself. First you'll have to find a way to communicate a simple message to your neighbor. Look up the Hmong words for *you, say, I, write.* If you can't pronounce *koj, nyeem, kuv, sau,* then write them down. Try these words out with your neighbor. If it works, then when s/he reads the first word, you write it down. Go back and listen to the tape and practice the words you missed.

- Try to make sense of the words the teacher marked as the key words. What could this passage mean?

Hmoob ..... Hmong
Los Tsuas teb ..... Laos
Nplog ..... Lao
Asmeslikas ..... America
hais lus khov kho ..... speak-word-firm-firm ("talk big")
ib tug neg muaj nyiaj heev ..... a-person-have-money-much (rich man)
ib tug neeg tawv dawb ..... a-person-skin-white (Caucasian/European)
Daj Hau ..... yellow-hair (Caucasian/European)
yeeb ncuab ..... enemy, stranger
tus hau zos ..... the village-head (chief)
tsis paub ..... not-know
tus kwv tij ..... (singular) clanmate
cov kwv tij ..... (plural) clanmates
kawm txawj kawm ntse ..... educated
xav ..... want
tau ..... get
dab tsi ..... what
lus Asmeslikas ..... word-America (English)
ib tug menyuam tub hluas Hmoob ..... young Hmong man
txaj txaj muag ..... shy-shy-face (embarrassed)
ntsej muag liab liab ..... face-red-red (embarrassed)
tsis ..... not, no
to taub ..... understand
txhais lus ..... translate

It would help to have an orienting statement or two ("this is about an American Hmong who goes to visit Lao Hmong in a village"). It would also help if there was an illustration. Even without those, however, the key words suggest that this has to do with Hmong, Lao, and Americans, the languages, a village chief, a stranger, not knowing, a Hmong young man, translating, being embarrassed...

Modifying Lessons for LEP Students

There are great lesson designs for limited-English speaking students in ideal situations. However, many times a teacher faces one or two very limited students in the midst of a full class of regular students. What can an over-taxed, under-trained teacher do to help those students survive, and—perhaps—to gain competence in the language?

What follows is a list of the chapter titles, section headings, *and* subheadings—*every prominently placed phrase in the text of Chapter 5 of the community college government textbook, and every* boldfaced word *that appears in the text. Let's suppose that in class is a Russian and a Vietnamese student, both of whom can write the roman alphabet, can read their own language, and have a dictionary. Chapter 5 has 30 pages, with sentences as convoluted as those listed in the "summary". If the students write down all flagged words and phrases, then defines them, they have a "ball-park" idea of what the chapter is about. If there is no way to identify the key words and phrases, it means figuring out each word on the 30 pages, a daunting task for even the most motivated and disciplined student. The teacher needs to select the most important words—and many text books highlight many of those with boldface or italics. The other thing the teacher can do is to provide several summary statements—the key ideas of the chapter. In this case, the texts's authors provide six summary statements, but the teacher could have them broken down into simpler sentences The key words and summary sentences, then, are the "bones" of the lesson.*

Chapter title—Civil Rights
Introduction
civil rights
participatory rights
citizen's right under the *law*
equal protection clause **of the 14th amendment**
civil liberties

Section title—Equal Justice Under Law
Subsection title—Equality: A Concept in Dispute
equality
equality of opportunity
equality of condition
equality of result
Subsection title—Equality and the Constitution
classify
scrutiny
reasonable basis test
***rationally* related to a *legitimate* government objective**
strict scrutiny test
classification is necessarily related to a *compelling* governmental interest
suspect classifications
moderate scrutiny test
law is *substantially* related to a *important* government objective

Section title—Racial Discrimination
E Pluribus Unum
Subsection title—The Legacy: Slavery, Civil War, and Reconstruction
Emancipation Proclamation **of 1863**
Thirteenth Amendment
Reconstruction
Plessy* v. *Ferguson
separate-but-equal doctrine
Subsection title—Formalizing Third-Class Citizenship
white primary
Smith* v. *Allwright
Subsection title—The Counterattack
NAACP
Legal Defense Fund
Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka
Subsection title—Putting *Brown* to Work: The Law and Politics of Integration
Civil Rights Act of 1964
Subsection title—The Continuing Effects of *Brown*
de jure segregation
de facto segregation

Subsection title—Affirmative Action
affirmative action
Regents of the University of California v. Bakke

Section title—Voting Rights
francise
Subsection title—The Voting Rights Act
Voting Rights Act of 1965
has neither the *purpose* nor the *effect* of "denying or abridging the right to vote on account of race or color."
Subsection title—The 1982 Amendment

Section title—Sex Discrimination
Subsection title—The Legacy
Subsection title—Gender to the Forefront
National Organization of Women
comparable worth
Subsection title—The Equal Rights Amendment
Equal Rights Amendment
Roe* v. *Wade

Section title—Other Americans and Civil Rights
Subsection title—Native Americans
Subsection title—Hispanics
Subsection title—Immigrants
Simpson-Mazzoli Immigration Act **of 1986**
Subsection title—The Elderly
Subsection title—The Poor

Section title—Legislative Apportionment
legislative apportionment
Subsection title—The Problem
Subsection title—The Supreme Court's Solution
Baker* v. *Carr
Wesberry* v. *Sanders
one person, one vote
Reynolds* v. *Sims

Subsection title—Equal Representation: A Continuing Controversy
gerrymandering

Summary

1 Civil rights are participatory rights: one's rights under the law to participate in society and the political system on an equal footing with others. On the basis of the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause, the Supreme Court has devised the reasonable basis test, the strict scrutiny test, and the moderate scrutiny test to determine what kinds of distinctions of classifications among citizens are constitutional.

2. Only since the landmark case of Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka in 1954 has the nation made significant progress toward removing discrimination on the basis of race from American life. Controversy over Brown continues, especially in public schools outside the South.

3 Only since the enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 have black Americans been fully able to participate in the political process, expecially in the southern states.

4. Most discriminations based on sex are generally forbidden by statute and by the Supreme Court's interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment. The proposed Equal Rights Amendment has not become part of the Constitution

5 Civil rights questions arise with other groups too Native Americans, Hispanics, immigrants, the elderly, and the poor face discrimination and present special needs

6. The Fourteenth Amendment now requires that electoral districts for the U.S House of Representatives and for state legislatures to be the same in population. With each new census, states must reapportion

1. Your "civil rights" allow you to participate in society and the political system. Your participation is equal to that of other people. The law of the land, the Constitution, has a 14th amendment, called the "equal protection" clause. The Supreme Court has made several decisisions that define what "equal protection" means. These decisions have resulted in three kinds of "test" to determine if a person is suffering from discrimination—1) the reasonable basis *test; 2) the* strict scrutiny *test; 3) the* moderate scrutiny *test. This means that all people are equal under the law, but in some cases, people can be treated differently.*

Explaining the stories of key people is one way to help students understand—stories about people are interesting, narrative, and chronological—they are somewhat like gossip! Teachers might include the stories behind the various court decisions, the stories of Thurgood Marshall, Martin Luther King, Jr , Betty Friedan, César Chávez, and the stories of various legal and illegal immigrants. Biographies written for junior high students (with lots of pictures), and resources like Hirsch's *Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* help students put these incidents into context.

8th Annual Southeast Asia Education Faire
March 7, 1992
Call for Presenters!

The Southeast Asia Education Faire is an informal conference with a variety of workshops for educators and community members It is planned by the Refugee Educators' Network, and is designed for the widest possible participation The focus is on issues related to the education and adjustment of Southeast Asians and other more recent newcomers. The goal of the Faire is to increase awareness and spark an interest in learning more

The proceeds from the Faire provide the major funding for purchasing items in the Southeast Asian Community Resource Center The aim of the Center is to make information about Southeast Asians easily accessible to anyone who is interested

There are usually at least 25 different workshops offered at four times during the day In addition, there are displays and tables of hard-to-find crafts and resources for sale The workshops fall into one or more of the following groups:

•Practitioners

Teachers, doctors, nurses, social workers people who have actual experience working with Southeast Asian clients, and have some strategy or technique that can be shared with others A "how-to-do it" session

•Performers

Singers, dancers, craftsmen, artisans .people who have a skill to demonstrate This can be a day-long demonstratino and display, or a workshop in which the performance is explained and put into context

•Personalities

There are many Southeast Asians who have a story to tell and can answer questions from the audience This is a chance for the participants to interact with "insiders" on a variety of topics, including a look at the backgrounds of various Southeast Asians

•Perspectives

Research, masters' theses or projects, Ph D dissertations, surveys, studies, unpublished papers a few insights into the research that focuses on Southeast Asians This is also a place for overviews of the various languages—either to learn to pronounce peoples' names a little better or to discover areas of difficulty between one of the Southeast Asian languages and English

•Purchases

Exhibitors, people with things to sell or display related to teaching Southeast Asian students or learning more about their backgrounds $75 exhibitors' fee

Send a short descriptionof your idea, along with your name, affiliation, and short "bio" to Refugee Educators' Network, 2460 Cordova Lane, Rancho Cordova CA 95670. Phone: (916) 635-6815; fax: (916) 635-0174. **Deadline for submission:** November 1, 1991.

Southeast Asia Community Resource Center
2460 Cordova Lane,
Rancho Cordova Ca 95670,
916 635-6815

Make payable to Folsom Cordova USD/SEACRC—

☐ #S8801 *Handbook for Teaching Hmong-Speaking Students* Bliatout, Downing, Lewis, Yang, 1988. $4.50 (carton discount for lots of 58: $3.50)

☐ #S8802 *Handbook for Teaching Khmer-Speaking Students* Ouk, Huffman, Lewis, 1988. $5.50 (carton discount for lots of 40: $4.50)

☐ #S8903 *Handbook for Teaching Lao-Speaking Students* Luangpraseut, Lewis 1989. $5.50 (carton discount for lots of 42: $4.50)

☐ #S8904 *Introduction to the Indochinese and their Cultures* Chhim, Luangpraseut, Te, 1989. $9.00 (carton discount for lots of 32: $8.00)

☐ #S8805 *English-Hmong Bilingual Dictionary of School Terminology Cov Lus Mis Kuj Txhais ua Lus Hmoob* Huynh D Te, translated by Lue Vang, 1988 $2.00 (no carton price)

☐ #S9006 *Vietnamese Language Materials Sourcebook* Huynh Dinh Te, 1990 $2.00 (no carton discount; one copy free to educational institutions or student associations)

Add California tax if applicable. For orders under $30.00 add 1.50 per copy shipping and handling. For orders over $30.00, add 10% shipping/handlng. If you wish UPS for quantity orders, please request it.

☐ #S9999 *CONTEXT: Southeast Asians in California,* annual subscription $10.00.

REN
Refugee Educators' Network meetings:

September 19, 1991
November 21, 1991
January 23, 1992
February 20, 1992
May 21, 1992

Southeast Asia Education Faire '92
March 7, 1992

Make payable to Refugee Educators' Network—

___ #R001	Lao Alphabet Poster	$3.50
___ #R002	Lao Primer	$4.00
___ #R003	Lao 1st Grade Reader	$5.00
___ #R004	Lao 2nd Grade Reader	$5.50
___ #R005	Lao 3rd Grade Reader	$6.50
___ #R006	Hmong Primer	$4.00

Includes tax; $1.00 per item shipping/handling up to $30.00. Over $30.00, 10% s/h.

Make payable to Lue Vang,
PO Box 423, Rancho Cordova CA 95741-0423.

Grandmother's Path, Grandfather's Way (Vang & Lewis, revised printing 1990)

$14.95, plus $2.00 shipping/handling and applicable CA tax. Wholesale price available for buyers with resale permit; call 916 635-6815 for information.

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c/o Folsom Cordova USD
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