

Context:

Southeast Asians & other newcomers in California's classrooms

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Life as a Natoma Boy

In the spring of 1990 we began a study of Vietnamese gangs in Orange County, California, with two, deceptively simple, questions in mind: who are these young people who call themselves *bui doi*, or, literally translated, "life like dust," and what makes them do what they do? Our research began at the California Youth Authority (C.Y.A.), doing volunteer tutoring with Vietnamese juvenile offenders, many of whom were involved in gangs. Although there was a great deal of suspicion initially (the fact that we are both white males in our twenties made it all the more difficult), we slowly gained the cautious trust of a few individuals. Once released from C.Y.A., these individuals introduced us to their homeboys and homegirls from different gangs.

Although most of the gang members initially called us "F," a Vietnamese gang-slang expression for undercover cop (from "F.B.I."), we began to "kick back" with them: in cafes and playing pool, eating meals and drinking with them, and "hanging" and sleeping in their motel rooms, apartments, or houses. The trust of one member slowly spread to others, and we started to develop friendships and feel included in the group. Over a period of months, many of them came to trust or at least like us enough to share their stories and let us "inside" the workings of the gang.

Beginning with a small video camera and then, a year later, moving to more elaborate work with a 16mm film camera, we



The 50-mile drive from Los Angeles to Orange County, California, covers a cultural distance of 7,000 miles, as you travel to an area with the largest population of Vietnamese people outside of Vietnam. The change is first evident in the signs that line the rows of strip-malls along Bolsa Avenue: *Cafe Co May, Pho 79, Nguyen and Ly, Inc.*

As you begin to explore, you find an extension of Vietnam: a wonderfully rich culture transplanted with its refugees to Orange County. This is where more than 140,000 Vietnamese refugees have settled since 1975, the year of the fall of Saigon (the former capital of South Vietnam), along with its U.S.-backed regime. Beginning in 1975, three areas in Orange County were targeted to become a new home for tens of thousands of South Vietnamese slotted for permanent resettlement in the United States. In 1979, a second wave of refugees, known popularly as the "boat people," were also gradually resettled in Orange County, as well as other areas across the United States. The Vietnamese communities in Orange County have since developed into significant and successful commercial and cultural centers, and have formed unofficial boundaries with the surrounding Caucasian, Hispanic and Korean populations. To most people outside the immediate vicinity, the predominantly Vietnamese communities in Orange County are collectively known as "Little Saigon."

Within the early refugee population were members of prominent criminal organizations once active in Vietnam. Many of these individuals were former South Vietnamese military personnel, and between the years 1975 and 1979 they attempted to reestablish the former criminal structures which had been in place in Vietnam during the war years. Their attempts met with varying degrees of success, but the organized crime structures never fully took hold.

With the influx of "boat people" beginning in 1979, loosely structured youth gangs (from 12 to 25 years of age) began to emerge within the Vietnamese community. They had no particular ties to larger organized criminal operations, and were largely self-sufficient. The average size of such a gang in the mid- to late-1980's was between 6 and

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**12th annual
Southeast Asia
Education Faire
March 2, 1996**

Refugee Educators' Network

This group of educators meets at the above address 5 times per year to share information and plan an annual conference, the Southeast Asian Education Faire—9:00-11:30, 3rd Thursdays.

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10 members. In the last few years, however, several gangs have achieved membership upwards of one hundred members (which includes affiliate chapters in different areas across the country). There are both female Vietnamese gangs, such as Innocent Bitch Killers, South Side Scissors and Midnight Flowers, and male gangs, including the Natoma Boyz, The Chosen Brothers and Nip Family, most of which also have associated female groups (e.g., Natoma Girlz). By recent estimates, there are well over 1,000 Vietnamese gang members, out of a total of some 6,000 Orange County gang members of Southeast Asian descent.

Driving to Little Saigon along Harbor Boulevard, we pass Disneyland, "The Happiest Place on Earth," and then a sign that reads, "The Crystal Cathedral—2 miles." We turn onto Bolsa Avenue, onto a side street, and then into a quiet residential neighborhood. We park in front of a typical middle-class home, set between that of a Mexican family and that of a retired couple, and approach the front door.

Our knock is returned with "ai do?" "Who's there?" spoken in Vietnamese. We answer with our names, positioning ourselves so as to be seen through the viewglass in the door, and we're let in. We add our shoes to a pile near the doorway, and join Ricky in the living room with a group of a dozen or so young Vietnamese—a loosely associated gang known as "Natoma Boyz."

With an old couch and a few blankets as the only furnishings, some watch the television resting on the floor, others play cards or sit talking, one does her homework from a school book, and a few sleep bunched together in a corner. After a brief "hello," we join the group watching television and slowly ease into a form of "zoning out" with them.

Most Vietnamese gang members of Ricky's generation were between five and fifteen years old when they came to the United States as refugees. As children, they grew up during the late stages of the Vietnam War (1968-1975) and in the turmoil that followed. They tell stories of incredible hardship, as they often endured harsh living conditions at home after the North Vietnamese takeover, and then faced harrowing voyages to the United States. Ricky's childhood experiences in Vietnam are typical of many of his fellow gang members. His description of his time in Vietnam also highlights, among other things, the acquisition of street survival skills at a very young age:

I was born in 1972 in central Vietnam, near the city of Hue. My family had to move around a lot when the war was going on. Like when I was five or six years old, and we move from Hue all the way down to Saigon, from one city to the next.

I remember when I was little I used to do things, like, during the day, when my mom and dad go to work and stuff, I'd just wander on the street. Just going to the market and stuff. And I used to steal things to eat. Sometimes I'd get caught, and sometimes I'd ——— get chased. But most of my time I just wander around the streets and neighborhoods.

Then we start moving from one city to the next. We never really stay any place long, so my childhood was like, I never really have any friends for a long time. I'd just meet kids in the street and then . . . that was it.

Like I remember when my father was sent to prison by the V.C. ["Viet Cong" or, the North Vietnamese Army] and my mom was raising the whole family. We used to have like street gangs. We'd ——— around in the neighborhood, making trouble. And we used to get bamboo sticks and make them into a sword or a big giant knife and stuff like that. We used to go into the middle of a street and

start fighting and stuff. You know, it was fun. And around this time I used to see people put on stretchers, being carried down from the hills, and there would be bullets flying around and stuff like that. —, a bomb explodes, and they'd be coming down the hill, yelling and screaming. They lost a leg. Sometimes they lost an arm. People who don't yell, they are the ones who lost their head. And, you know, seeing people die, that was like just ordinary, on a daily basis.

Then my father escaped from prison and we started moving again. My father had a plan to try to move someplace that was like close to the ocean, so we can try to escape from Vietnam. So we moved to another city that's right by the ocean. And from there, we sell bread to make money. It was tough. Like, I'd wake up at one o'clock in the morning, go pick it up from the bread factory and come back at three o'clock. Set the bread in a bucket, and then go sell it from five o'clock in the morning until like ten o'clock in the day. And then come home get a little sleep, or just get a little rest. Eat something, and then like four o'clock in the afternoon pick up another shipment and sell until midnight. And I was so young, like six or seven years old, but I help my family make money to escape. And then one night, after we'd already tried a couple times, we finally did escape, on a boat.

For Ricky and most of the “boat people,” the journey by sea was a difficult one. One gang member, Hai, tells of an encounter with pirates while on a refugee boat when he was ten. His mother was beaten and thrown into the sea, while he was set adrift in a small raft with his brother. His is a painful story, but by no means exceptional, as many Vietnamese refugees faced similar hardships as they made the long and difficult journey to the United States. In fact, by some estimates as many as two-thirds of the “boat people” were attacked by pirates, each an average of more than twice.

Refugee camps in Southeast Asia were then home for 2-3 years for most of the “boat people,” while they awaited transport to a host country like the United States. The camps were often crime-ridden, and are described by many gang members as a place where, as children, they honed their “survival skills.” Once in the United States, many of these children, some with families, others without, settled in Orange County.

As we kick back with Ricky, we notice several unfamiliar faces. Some are probably from other gangs, living at the house for a while. Ricky explains that a couple of their homeboys have also come in from Minneapolis. It seems they are “on the run,” but Ricky doesn't elaborate. There is also one individual who stands out because of his apparent youth. Johnny looks no older than 12 or 13, and appears unsure of himself with the group. Ricky tells us that he ran away from home a week ago, having been beaten by his foster father one time too many. As the day wears on, Johnny seems to settle in more and more. He's cautious and shy, but slowly adapts to the group. Ricky and others give him his space, but also try to make sure he's comfortable and make him feel at home.

The road from their initial settlement in the United States to settling with a gang varies for each member, but some common themes emerge. Many of the gang members speak of problems adjusting to the new way of life when they first arrived in the United States. Almost all have dropped out of school, typically frustrated by the language barrier (there are an estimated 12,000 Vietnamese-speaking students with limited English abilities in Orange County schools alone), as well as their inability to successfully assimilate. They have usually missed a minimum of 1-2 years of school by the time they reach the United States, and their parents will then com-

started to document what we were learning and observing. We had made it clear from the outset that we intended to make a documentary, and most people initially accepted, or at least tolerated, the presence of a camera. While there were always a few individuals who preferred to stay “off camera,” most of the gang members quickly became accustomed to being filmed.

Over the course of the study and especially as we began to film, one member of the gang “Natoma Boyz,” Ricky Phan, emerged as a central figure. Ricky was well-respected by the others—a leader of sorts—and he was articulate, friendly, and one of the people who had “looked after us” from the beginning. As we learned more about him, and more about his past, the documentary began to take shape around his story.

Thus in the study guide and in the film “**bui doi : life like dust**” it is through Ricky that we begin to answer to our initial questions. As you read the guide, you will learn more about many of the themes and issues raised in the film. You will also learn more about the fieldwork process: how we came to know and learn about Ricky and the Natoma Boyz. And through the combination of the study guide and the film, perhaps you can begin to understand Vietnamese gangs, and the experiences, past and present, that are part of the lives of the young Vietnamese gang members themselves.

This project was begun during graduate studies at The Center for Visual Anthropology, University of Southern California, and completed after graduation as an independently produced film. Production support for “**bui doi: life like dust**,” was provided by The Center for Visual Anthropology, The International Documentary Association, The National Asian American Telecommunications Association, and The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and through private contributions.

Assistance in HTML formatting was provided by Michael Mascha, JP Ferraro, Pushpa Tulachan and Peter Bloom.

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bui doi—life like dust

Production year: 1994

Format: 16mm; black and white; mono optical; 1:1:33 ratio

Length: 29 min 17 sec

Produced and Directed: Ahrin Mishan and Nick Rothenberg

Cinematography, Sound and Editing: Ahrin Mishan and Nick Rothenberg

Music: Ahrin Mishan

Broadcast Premiere: AliveTV - PBS series. Fall 1994.

Synopsis:

bui doi, life like dust examines a critical moment in the life of Ricky Phan, a Vietnamese refugee and gang member who is now serving an 11-year sentence for armed robbery. Through a complex interweaving of cinema verite footage, shot over a 3-year period prior to Ricky's arrest, and more poetic techniques associated with narrative film, *life like dust* creates a subtle portrait of Ricky's state of mind as he sits in prison trying to make sense of his difficult life. The film travels between Ricky's distant memories of home and his recent experience: from a childhood on the streets of a war-weary Saigon to his days as a "gangster" in the United States; and from a nighttime escape from Vietnam to his present life in a California State prison. Ricky is a *bui doi*, "a life like dust," and he can only dream of where he will drift to next.

monly change their birth dates, making them younger (by as many as 10 years) to give them a better chance in school. But the resultant age-grade matching problem can be severe, placing, for example, a seventeen year-old Vietnamese student in a classroom of sixth-graders. One gang member, Tam, shared a personal history that is typical of how many young Vietnamese join gangs. As he relates his story:

I came over here in '84, you know, and I see United States is freedom, right? When I get here they put me in school, but my English is bad and I'm much older. I try to kick back, about a year, year and a half. I go to school and everything—be cool, you know. But I just can't fit in. People got problems with us Vietnamese—like they disrespect my people, you know. They disrespect me. They call us "nip," or "you're a little punk," you know, because they're bigger than us.

One day they jumped me. When I went to the principal, you know, he suspended me 5 days for fighting, and he suspend the white guys 3 days. Then my dad kicked me out of my house because I was suspended. So I said in my mind, "— it, I don't want to live in the house anyway." So I started kicking it with some of my homeboys in the neighborhood. We do things together. I kicked back, I sleep in the car, motel, you know, rob house and stuff. Just have fun.

As in Tam's case, home life can be an added burden for young refugees. In Vietnam they were raised with a traditional concept of family unity, but families were often forced to separate for the long and expensive journey to the United States. Even for the minority who did arrive with their families largely intact, there was often considerable strain on the family in making the transition to life in the United States. The resulting disruptions in Vietnamese family dynamics can be severe. As a researcher has stated, "the traditional Vietnamese family has faced tremendous change in gender roles, family expectations, generation perspectives, and family relationships since arriving in the United States. . . . The loss of economic security, social status, and self-esteem often creates depression, and the role reversals which may occur have placed stress on marriage relationships." Such disruption in the family would often leave the younger members floundering.

Even if they managed to maintain some family ties once in the United States, many gang members found intolerable the demands of their parents' or relatives' traditional Vietnamese value system. They would then turn to the streets as run-aways. Others, like Tam, have been forced out of their homes, unable to change their parents' views, or having tried their parents' patience one time too many. The scenarios described here are not meant to imply that all gang members are the product of unsuccessful adjustment to life in the United States. Ricky had a 3.5 GPA through his senior year in high school, but, as he says, "then I started to hang out with the wrong crowd." There are always a few transient members as well, some of whom may even be in school, who simply hang out with the gang socially, returning home each night, or after a short stay.

Yet somewhere in their personal histories, most of the Vietnamese gang members have lived through some very difficult experiences. At the very least, most gang members of Ricky's generation carry a legacy of hardship from their childhood in Vietnam. As Ricky's story suggests, the time after the North Vietnamese takeover has been described as a period when "one had to learn to lie, not occasionally but routinely, as part of the system." One gang member, Hung, describes his experience in Vietnam and in the refugee camps as a time when "you had to know how to run on the streets, to go and rob, just to live day by day." It is their early and on-going

experiences of hardship that form the basic bond for the gang. Therein lies a telling vulnerability that is, perhaps, a key element in understanding who they are. These factors form a common foundation for the gang members as they come together in places like motels and run-down apartments and houses, where they learn to survive on their own.

Even as we sit in the living room “zoning out,” there seems to be a certain routine to the evening. These are the “daily rounds” of gang life: there’s an occasional crime when the money runs low, some daily “cruising” around, frequent visits to coffee shops and clubs (the latter only when the money is plentiful), partying many evenings, and, more than anything, a lot of kicking back like today. A bowl of hot noodles is shared. People move from one group to another: listening to Vietnamese “soft rock” and American pop and rap music in a back room, playing *ding lung* (a Vietnamese card game), or just lounging around, watching television and smoking cigarettes one after another. The evening wears on, and at one point Ricky turns to us and says, “pretty boring, eh?” as he gets up and walks to another room.

A short time later we hear some commotion from the back of the house, and we grab the camera and go to check it out. One of the new faces, Doug, is about to be “jumped in,” and four of his soon-to-be homeboys have formed a circle around him. Several have taken their shirts off and expose tattoos like “Natoma Boyz,” “Y ’n P” (Yellow and Proud)—written in so-called Ese-style—and several pictures of dragons. Taking their cue from one of the Natoma Girlz holding a watch, they proceed to “jump” Doug—hitting and kicking him until the girl yells “Stop!” Doug survives his thirty-second initiation relatively unscathed. He smiles as he is welcomed as a Natoma Boy, but there is little other celebration or confirmation of his new status. People simply return to the “routine,” while Doug rests in a corner. Like many aspects of Vietnamese gangs, the practice of the “jump in” has been taken from other gangs. As a relatively new gang group, the Vietnamese gang members have often adopted the practices of Latino and African-American gangs. These practices can then be transformed, often taking on characteristics that are distinctly Vietnamese. Such appropriation applies to everything from clothing styles (adopting elements of the “Chicano” look in the late 80’s) to tattoos (many Vietnamese tattoos are written in “Ese-style,” i.e., a Latino-style script) to slang expressions (“homeboy,” “kickin’ it” and many other terms originated with Latino and African-American gangs). Similarly, “jump ins” have long been used by African-American and Latino gangs as an initiation rite. “Jump ins,” however, have only recently been adopted by Vietnamese gangs.

Generally speaking, membership in a Vietnamese gang is achieved informally by affiliating oneself with a particular group and earning their respect. Loyalty, toughness, reputation and individual personality are all key elements in earning the respect of a gang, and the right to call oneself a member. In some cases, a “jump in” is now used as a final step to initiate a new member. The “jump in” for the Natoma Boyz is carefully constructed: the beating is timed, there are no “cheap shots” allowed (i.e., blows to the face or groin), and, although some “jump in” rituals can be extreme, most try to avoid serious injury to the initiate. Yet even as a “ritual beating,” when the “jump in” is used, it serves an essential role as a final rite of passage into the group.

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Afternoon becomes evening, and some people grow restless. An offer to head to a coffee shop is gladly accepted by 4 or 5 of us, and we pile into Tan's black Nissan Maxima, squeezing in around the oversized speakers that take up part of the back seat. The drive is quiet on conversation, and painfully loud on music. The bass beat makes the whole car rattle, except for a few moments when someone spots a police car, and the music drops away in an instant. We head to a familiar coffee shop just off Natoma Avenue (the gang's namesake and the street where one of the original leaders lived), and the musical onslaught continues in the cafe, although now it's mostly Vietnamese love songs. In a dark corner, we join a table with a few familiar faces, and order drinks: Rau Ma (vegetable juice), Cafe Sua Da (a cold espresso sweetened with condensed milk) and Cam Vat (fresh orange juice with sugar). The conversation—mostly in Vietnamese—seems light, although we can only pick out and understand a few words here and there.

We head to a video game with Loc, one of the half dozen or so in the cafe. It is another of the "shooting games," and we spend most of our time watching Loc's plane destroy the enemy ships that so easily take our quarters after only a few minutes of play. Some people from our group get up and go outside, and we leave the game just as Loc is about to win his third free game. The bill is paid by Tan, and we head out. We get into another car with Loc and one of the people we met at the cafe, and head to a pool hall, as Ricky and the others speed off. This time it's a blue truck, with even more space for giant bass woofers in the enclosed flatbed, and even more amplification to crank up the huge speakers.

The social milieu of the gang is fairly limited. Their existence is basically centered around their place of residence (an apartment or house, if they have been able to find someone to sign a lease, or, more commonly, a cheap motel) and a few gathering places in the area (two or three coffee shops and restaurants, a pool hall or two, a couple of clubs, and, usually, the central shopping mall, "*Phu Uc Toa*"). It is within this space that most of the "business" of being a gang member takes place. The coffee shops are especially important, as they often serve as gathering spots for friends and fellow gang members. It is most often there that stories are told, information is shared, and new recruits are to be found. As a locus of gang social activity, they can also be centers of violence. Shootings are not as frequent among Vietnamese gangs as among African-American or Latino gangs, but when they do take place, coffee shops are common locations. If there is any sense of territoriality, it is only in the preference for certain coffee shops or similar "hang outs."

Unlike African-American and Latino gangs, Vietnamese gangs do not claim "turf," that is, an area in an urban or rural neighborhood that is designated by the gang as their sovereign territory. This is due, in part, to the fact that they are not heavily involved in drug dealing, thus they do not need to claim authority over a particular area. There is a "roving turf," such that, for example, a particular coffee shop might be "turf" for the Natoma Boyz for a period of time, and then be frequented by another gang. Thus Vietnamese gangs are sometimes described as nomadic. They will change their hangouts, residence, or even move from city to city depending on a number of different circumstances, such as increased pressure from local police, avoiding warrants, the promise of a lucrative criminal opportunity in another region, visiting relatives or merely the desire to change their setting. As a

consequence, there are no definite areas where you are likely to find a particular gang, nor where you are likely to find gang members in general. One striking result of this situation is the easy co-existence with the community around them. Except for their residence, none of their gathering places are exclusive to gang members.

As a subgroup within the Vietnamese community, they share its features with Vietnamese of all kinds. At any location—coffee shop, club or pool hall—you are likely to find a gang member, who might look just like any other patron, alongside a Vietnamese businessman, a businessman whose house might be the next one robbed by a gang.

As we drive past the front window we see rows of pool tables lining the hall. It is a busy night, with groups of Vietnamese men around most of the tables, concentrating on their games of three-ball billiards. But as we pull in to park, Loc notices a familiar car, and we quickly exit and head back onto the street. Apparently the car belongs to a rival gang member, a member of “T.R.G.” (Tiny Rascal Gang), and Loc recognized it from a shooting a few weeks back. The conversation is animated, as they talk about the “——— stupid” members of T.R.G.. A few stories are told as illustration, and as the conversation dies down, the music comes back up. We stop briefly at another coffee shop, where the “encounter” is related to some friends. It seems one close call is enough for the evening, and we head back to the house.

Few divisions exist between Vietnamese gangs. These are loosely defined groups that often cross socio-economic lines, and occasionally will even include members from other ethnic groups. People may also be members of more than one gang simultaneously. This situation arises out of the very nature of their activities. Since Vietnamese gangs are not heavily involved in drug dealing (although there is a fair amount of marijuana and some crack-cocaine use), there is no real need to establish “turf.” Without a need for territorial divisions, there is relatively little around which gang divisions are formed. Thus rivalries are seemingly forced, more as a means of self-definition than self-preservation. For example, divisions may be formed out of events that have no direct relation to gang activity, such as a dispute over a gang member’s girlfriend. However, such relatively minor conflicts may quickly escalate into dangerous exchanges between gangs, including shootings. But such events are rare with the Vietnamese gangs. Instead, all of the gangs recognize a common enemy in the police, who indirectly seem to create the definitive bond that joins all of the gangs together.

The sedate atmosphere is gone as we return to the apartment. People are hurriedly getting dressed, and we notice that the guns have materialized from their hiding places. Apparently someone has been busted. We ask Hai to fill us in, and he tells us that Ricky had picked up a good “lead” on a house for robbery as we sat in the coffee shop earlier that evening. It turns out the lead was good, but when they headed to a “mo” (motel) afterward to celebrate, a suspicious manager had called the police. The police had arrived at their motel room while they were on the phone with someone here in the house, and the connection was quickly cut off. Now they want to drive by the motel and check out the situation, and we are asked to take them: our being *me trong* (white people) is, for perhaps the first time, an asset.

The motel sits just off the freeway, no more than a five-mile drive from the house. As we circle around, we see three or four police cars parked outside of a room. We

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- Thompson, Mark. 1989. "The Untouchables: Vietnamese Robbery Gangs are a Headache for US Cops." In: *Far Eastern Economic Review*, V145: pp. 21-32.
- Tran Van Dien. 1981. *The Childhood Memories of Vietnam*. Bilingual edition. Westminster, Calif.: NV Printing.

notice that they surround another car, and as we turn a corner we can see that it is the black Maxima. We drive around a second time, but the bust is clearly over, and there seems to be no reason to think that anyone got away. Now we can only head back to the house and wait for news.

The survival of the group depends upon the success of a few gang members in committing crimes. They are most involved in robberies (taking property by means of force) and burglaries (breaking and entering with intent to steal), including shoplifting, auto-theft, car burglaries, computer theft and armed robbery. The most common and most lucrative form of robbery is home robbery, or "armed residential invasions," as they are referred to by the police. Vietnamese families will commonly keep cash or gold in their homes, based in part on a similar practice in Vietnam, and also due to distrust or lack of understanding of the American banking system. Thus their homes are attractive targets for gang robberies, which can net anywhere from five to twenty thousand dollars. The gang members are confident that their crime is likely to go unreported because of the family's fear of reprisals, distrust of the police (which again has a cultural component, from negative experiences with law enforcement in Vietnam), or not wanting to expose their own welfare fraud. If a few gang members can successfully pull off just one of these robberies, then the gang as a whole can live quite comfortably, at least for a period of time.

The next day we call in for news on the bust, but we get no answer at the house. We decide to make the drive down and see what's happening. After checking a few hangouts, we find Binh at a coffee shop. He tells us that the police raided the apartment the day after the robbery. We are hesitant to ask if he thinks someone gave away the location of the apartment, but he volunteers his feeling that they had probably been under surveillance for some time. The police found and confiscated three or four guns (including an Uzi), some bullets, and some stolen goods (the television, stereo, etc.). They took the names, real or false, of all the people who were in the apartment, and they took Hung and his girlfriend in for questioning.

Thus the group has now dispersed, with only those people who have clean records staying at the house. The rest have moved on, with a few apparently on the road to stay with friends in Texas and New York. It will now be difficult to get news of Ricky and the others in jail, but Binh thinks they will get off pretty easy. There even seems to be talk of "paying off" the victims of the robbery to keep them quiet, if necessary. Binh seems to take the events casually, but as I get up to leave he adds, "I hate this ——. I know they guilty, but every time it's like breaking up our family, and the cops don't give a ——."

Vietnamese gangs are remarkably well adapted to their circumstances. Economically, they are able to survive on a limited amount of criminal activity. And psychologically, they are supported by their group living situation, forming a type of extended family for themselves. Young Vietnamese immigrants will often become involved with gangs because of the surrogate family structure it provides. For those who arrived in the United States without any biological kin, it seems natural for them to seek out and form a bond with a social unit—in this case a gang—with whom they can share a common personal history. But others, like Ricky, have come to the United States with their entire immediate family intact, and there are even some younger gang members who were born in this country. For these individuals, the

motivations for joining a gang are slightly more complex.

Many become involved with a gang in reaction to difficulties they are experiencing personally and at home. There is also the somewhat intangible factor of “fun.” Although most gang members admit that there are “down times,” most claim that gang life is simply “fun” for them. Ricky once told us, “After you kick back with a gang for two days, on the third you won’t want to leave. The sense of family, however, seems to be the single most important feature of the gang for its members. Culturally, the Vietnamese emphasize “a strong concept of family unity and the necessity of hierarchical order and structure.” Vietnamese refugees have compensated for the disruption of the family unit by forming “reconstructed families” that may incorporate distant relatives or friends. Similarly, the gangs have reconstructed a family for themselves, although almost entirely out of friends with whom they share the street. The gang then functions very much like a typical Vietnamese family, structurally, economically and psychologically.

A few members will usually emerge as leaders, their status having been achieved through their experience and their personality. These individuals then take on some of the characteristics of “parents.” Their authority, however, is quite limited, as it depends solely on maintaining the respect of the group. They tend to have real authority only in their role as overseers of the economics of the gang. As gang resources are pooled (a characteristic also held in common with Vietnamese families), it will usually be the responsibility of one of the “parents” to see that basic necessities are taken care of, and that any surplus is fairly distributed. Disputes are rare, with most gang members seeming to appreciate the security of some form of authority figure, especially one who places virtually no restrictions on their social behavior. Traditional Vietnamese gender roles are also recreated in the gang. The males are largely responsible for generating the income for the group, and they often use the phrase “going to work” when leaving to commit a crime. The domestic aspects of their lives, such as cooking and cleaning for the group, are predominantly the responsibility of the females.

As important as these structural and economic features are, the essential role of the gang as “family” is in its psychological function. Ricky describes the gang family in this way:

When you live this life, normally you stay with a group, and everybody in group is like extra family, like your brothers and sisters. You look out for them and they look out for you. And, you know, the love between each other is built up after you stay together for a while, and you go through many experiences together, like running from a cop, going to a fight, — like that. You get to know them more, and if they treat you good, and you treat them good, then a relationship builds up real fast and then the friendship becomes very close. And then, that’s like brother or sister, you know. You — stick together. From that day on, when the two people believe in each other, from that day on, it’s brother for ever. Doesn’t matter how long they may be separated from each other. Like, if one of them goes in [to jail], when he comes out, the one that’s still outside is going to treat him just like before, you know. You’re mine, you’ll always be my brother.

So, it’s like that in this house. We are a family, you know. We do everything a normal family would do. We play games together, we eat together, we share clothes, we talk to each other, we comfort each other, we joke around with each other, we cuss at each other, but without meaning it, and sometimes we mean it too [he laughs]. We just do everything to have fun together. That’s what keeps

U.S. Government, Subcommittee on Investigations. 1993. *The New International Criminal and Asian Organized Crime (Report)*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

*Vigil, James Diego, et al. 1993. Vietnamese Youth Gangs in Southern California. In *The Ecology of Crimes and Drugs in the Inner City*. Jeff Fagan (ed.).

*Vigil, James Diego and Steve Yun. 1990. Vietnamese Youth Gangs in Southern California. In *Gangs in America*. R. Huff (ed.). Sage Pub: Newbury Park.

*Vigil, James Diego. 1988. *Barrio Gangs: Street Life and Identity in Southern California*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Study Questions

How do Vietnamese gangs compare with other gangs you know about?

What type of person do you think normally joins a gang? Does Ricky seem like the type of person you would expect to join?

Gang members often describe their gangs as being “like a family.” Do you think this is true? What features of the Natoma Boyz seem like a family to you? What do you think “parenting” and “love” mean in gang terms?

The gang members describe their life as “bui doi” - a life like dust. Why do you think a “life like dust” is how Vietnamese gang members describe their lives?

The “jump in” of Doug by the Natoma Boyz is one type of “rite of passage.” What kinds of events serve as rites of passage in other groups? What about in your own life?

Given what Ricky describes as the difficulties he had assimilating to life in the United States, and the racism and discrimination he experienced, how do you think we can maintain a multi-cultural society? Do you think this is an important part of dealing with the gang issue? What role does respect play?

There have always been disadvantaged groups in this country. Immigrants and refugees have been coming to this country for over two centuries. Yet the gang problem has only become severe in the last ten years. Why do you think gangs are such a problem now? What are the contributing factors?

How can you relate what you have learned to your own life? Do you have anything in common with Vietnamese gang members?

What would you want to say to Ricky if you could write or talk to him?

us together, and makes it into a family. I guess the bottom line is that I would die for people in this house. If you stay at home, then your father and mother would die for you, try their best to keep you alive, keep you happy and well. And like here, it's the same. If one person gets sick, then we take care of that person, treat him good. We buy him stuff that will make him feel better. And if somebody's sad, we cheer em' up, like your parents would do. We share everything, and that's what makes it special, you know. That's how we survive together. It's not because we came out from the same mother or anything like that. But we came from the same group, you know. I don't know how to explain it. It's like, it's a family from the heart, not from the blood. There's no blood, just love. Just love inside for each other.

A key component to the strength of the gang family is this implicit understanding that each member is willing to lay his or her life on the line for the sake of another member; it is the knowledge that in a crisis situation, someone, or the group itself, will save you. We leave Binh at the cafe, and head out to look for others who might still be around. There is no one at the house, and there are no familiar faces at any of the coffee shops or pool halls commonly frequented by the Natoma Boyz. Figuring the old hangouts may now be watched, those who are still around are probably using a new set of places. We finally find Loc at a pool hall. Like Binh, he seems to take the bust “in stride.” When we press him a bit, he simply responds, “It's just what it's about, living gang ho (a Vietnamese street expression for the gang lifestyle, which literally translates as “crazy life”). Living like us, you don't know what the next minute will be like. Like it's normal for you to see a guy stabbed right in front of your face, and you just sit there, can't do anything. Or it could be like for Ricky. You drinking beer in a ‘mo’ right now, and the next minute you sitting in jail, without a cigarette. It's just, whatever happens, happens. It's like that.”

Loc turns back to his game, a bit impatient with our inability to just accept that “it's normal,” and we head back to L.A. Like the gang members, we now have to start over with what's left of the gang, and we have to wait for news of Ricky and the others who were busted. We will have to work slowly to reestablish contact with them, certain of one thing: that the gang will soon form itself again.

Questions for further inquiry:

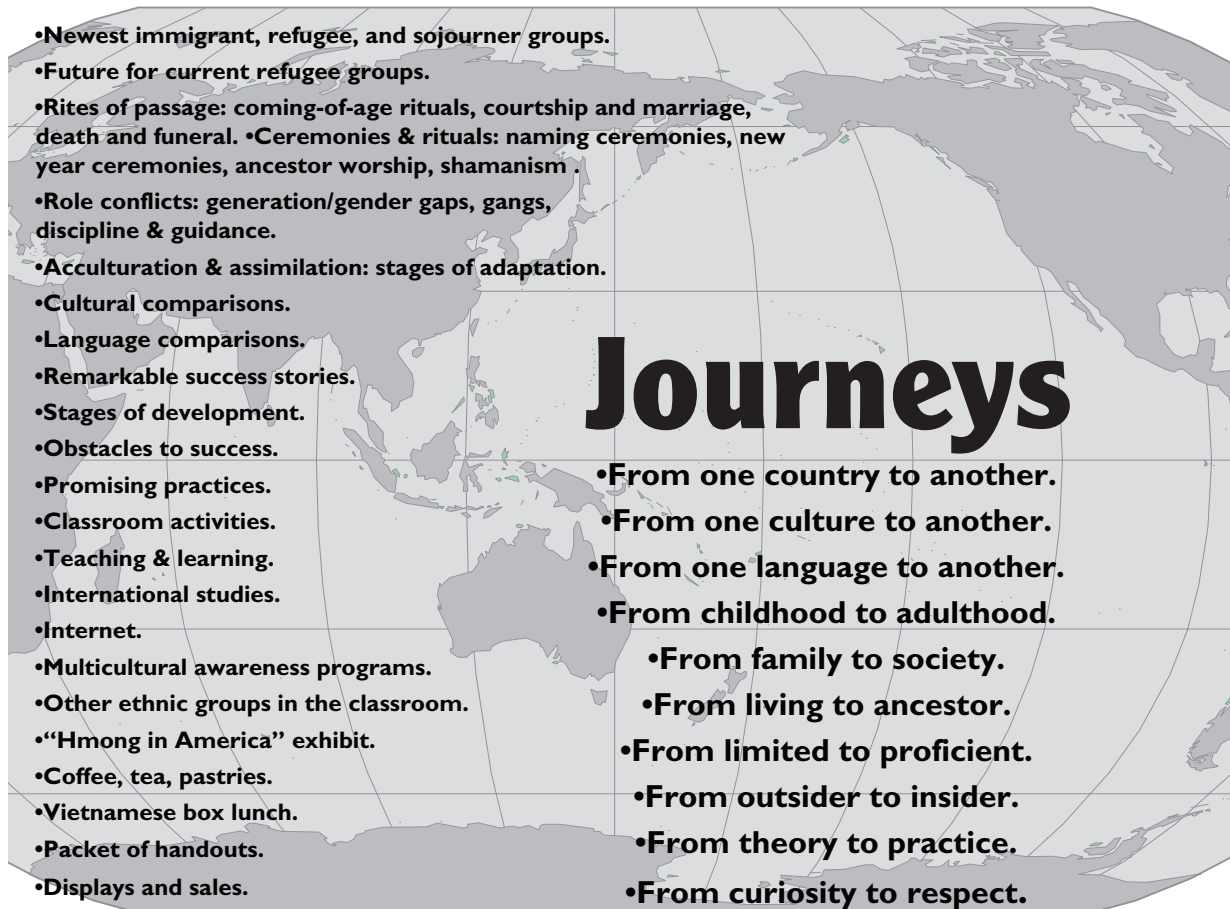
What is it about the relationship between the Vietnamese child, parents, siblings, and kin in this country that causes them to choose the gang as a family?

Can schools and communities create opportunities for others kinds of family-like group membership that would compete with gangs for allegiance?

How many of the Vietnamese youth who choose the gang as family are here without family?

Does the acculturation that Vietnamese children experience in American schools play a role in the transfer of family function from the home to the street? How are generalizations about “respect” and “disrespect” formed? Are counter-examples effective in changing generalizations?

How much of this experience sounds familiar to other Southeast Asians—SinoVietnamese, Lao, lu-Mien, Hmong, Khmer? Is there any commonality to the choices of youth socialized under communist regimes?



Journeys

- Newest immigrant, refugee, and sojourner groups.
- Future for current refugee groups.
- Rites of passage: coming-of-age rituals, courtship and marriage, death and funeral. •Ceremonies & rituals: naming ceremonies, new year ceremonies, ancestor worship, shamanism .
- Role conflicts: generation/gender gaps, gangs, discipline & guidance.
- Acculturation & assimilation: stages of adaptation.
- Cultural comparisons.
- Language comparisons.
- Remarkable success stories.
- Stages of development.
- Obstacles to success.
- Promising practices.
- Classroom activities.
- Teaching & learning.
- International studies.
- Internet.
- Multicultural awareness programs.
- Other ethnic groups in the classroom.
- “Hmong in America” exhibit.
- Coffee, tea, pastries.
- Vietnamese box lunch.
- Packet of handouts.
- Displays and sales.
- From one country to another.
- From one culture to another.
- From one language to another.
- From childhood to adulthood.
- From family to society.
- From living to ancestor.
- From limited to proficient.
- From outsider to insider.
- From theory to practice.
- From curiosity to respect.

**12th annual Southeast Asia Education Faire
Saturday March 23 1996
Sacramento City College
8:00 to 4:00**

\$45. Make purchase orders and checks payable to **Refugee Educators' Network** and mail to 2460 Cordova Lane, Rancho Cordova CA 95670. Phone: (916) 635-6815. Fax: (916) 635-0174. Deadline for registration will be March 8, 1996. Programs will be mailed 4-5 days prior to the event. No refunds. Some workshops have limited seating, require a small materials fee, and are on a first-come, first-serve basis. Vegetarian lunches will be available if requested at the time of registration.

Sponsored by Center USD, Center for Educational Equity, Elk Grove USD, Folsom Cordova USD, Grant Joint Union High SD, International Studies Program at Sacramento, Lincoln USD, MRC Northern California, North Sacramento SD, Rio Linda Elementary SD, Sacramento City USD, San Juan USD, Stockton USD, SWRL, UCB Teacher Education Dept, Washington USD, and the California Department of Education, Emergency Immigrant Program. Proceeds benefit the Southeast Asia Community Resource Center in Folsom Cordova Unified School District.

Human themes

Proverbs

Find proverbs from other languages/cultures that have the same message as these, from English & American folklore. Extra credit for bilingual responses!

Reap what you sow. (topic: consequences)

If you strike mud against the wall, even though it does not stick, it will leave a mark. (Arabic)

He shall reap hemp who sows hemp, and beans who sows beans. (Chinese)

He that blows into the fire must expect sparks in his eyes. (German)

From a wormy walnut tree you will gather wormy walnuts. (Greek)

If you sleep with a dog you will rise full of fleas. (Greek)

If you plant a mango then you may eat a mango. (Hindi)

If you bite a stone, you own teeth will be broken. (India)

Where you saw wood, there the sawdust will fall. (Russian)

"If" and "when" were planted, and "nothing" grew. (Turkish)

If you bring a firebrand into your hut then do not complain of the smoke. (West Africa)

April showers bring May flowers.

Absence makes the heart grow fonder.

A word to the wise is sufficient.

Cross that bridge when you come to it.

Don't count your chickens before they're hatched.

The early bird catches the worm.

Every cloud has a silver lining.

Experience is the best teacher.

The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.

Look before you leap.

No man is an island.

Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

Take the bitter with the sweet.

Two heads are better than one.

Where there's a will, there's a way.

Hmong for Beginners

Annie Jaisser (Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Berkeley, 1995)

300-page language text, prepared by linguistics graduate student Annie Jaisser, who has been researching the Hmong language and its teaching for several years. The book comes with an audiotape. Hmong language is taught at CSU Fresno, Merced College, and (usually) at the Southeast Asia Summer Studies Institute.

English–White Hmong Dictionary, 2nd edition

Brian McKibben (self-published, 1992), Route 11 Box 439, Parkersburg WV 26101.

English words followed by the Hmong meaning and an example sentence. Not many words, but so far there is no other White Hmong dictionary with English entry words. The author says that his intent to help students of the Hmong language.

“Early Marriage in a Hmong Cohort”

Ray Hutchinson, Miles McNall (*Journal of Marriage and the Family* 56 (August 1994): 579-590).

Married and non-married Hmong female high school students were compared on attitudinal, achievement, and background variables to explore factors associated with early marriage for mental health and educational expectations. Although more than half the female students were married by their senior year in high school, the majority remained in school, had educational expectations similar to their non-married peers, and were not differentiated on indices of depression, psychological well-being, self-esteem, self-derogation, or mastery. The

more usual individualistic models of marriage choice, which would consider this pattern “nonnormative” or “disorderly,” may not be appropriate for ethnic subgroups such as the Hmong, where high educational expectations coexist with high rates of early marriage and early childbearing.

A Free People: Our Stories, Our Voices, Our Dreams

Hmong Youth Cultural Awareness Project, 1994). 5317 York Avenue South, Minneapolis MN 55410.

Hmong culture, war and exodus, life in America, epilogue: all produced by Hmong high school students and their (family) informants.

Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen (1602-1777)

Li Tana and Anthony Reid, editors (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1993)

Translations of historical documents on the economy of Cochinchina (south Vietnam).

VietNow: Magazine About Today's Vietnamese-Americans

Trung Pham, editor. (Westminster: VIETNOW Publications, 1995). PO Box 4134, Westminster, CA 92684. (714) 841-0709.

Published 6 times per year, \$15. Examples of articles in the July/August issue: What's up with Vietnamese dads? (David Edelhart), Riding the wave II: sex, crime, and spring rolls (Quoc Hung Ngo), Thai Tai: Tai of all trades (Kristine Pham), Ha Nguyen: She's dressing up Hollywood (Kristine Pham), Girl gangs—hard core innocence, get involved, rough cut: origin of the South Side Scissors (Trung Pham), three strikes and gang crimes (Minh Do), Advice, Beauty, Fables, and more.

Resources

“Hmong Families: A World Apart”

Brian Bonner and Yee Chang (special pullout section, St Paul Pioneer Press, April 1995).

The authors and photographer spent six weeks in Laos, looking at the other end of the refugee trail. Articles include: Feet in America, Hearts in Laos; Two Brothers, Two Worlds; Door Closing, Dreams Dashed; Building a Village, Making a Promise; Pushed by Change, Pulled by Poverty; Illegal Refugee, Uneasy Truce; Deadly Debris, Remnants of War.

Shadow War: The CIA's Secret War in Laos

Kenneth Conboy with James Morrison (Boulder, Paladin Press, 1995). \$50.

Comprehensive history that took 10 years to compile and 650 interviews to complete. Contact Tina Mills (303) 443-7250.

Exploring Hmong Culture Through Video

Newist Studio B, University of Wisconsin Green Bay, WI 54311. (414) 465-2599, (800) 633-7445

After the War: A Family Album

A Wedding (arranged marriage)

Down With Us (gang drama)

The First Day of School in America (discrimination)

Videos produced by a ten Southeast Asian refugee teens called themselves “Magic Video,” and started to make movies. The project was funded by the Job Training Partnership Act, and the group calls themselves “a van full of high school kids with a broken tripod and big ambitions.”

Resources

Vietnam on the 'Net

Destination Vietnam Online. Travel magazine for potential visitors to Vietnam. Global Directions, Inc.
PO Box 470098, San Francisco 94147-0098
E-mail: gdisf@aol.com
E-mail: gdisf@well.com
Internet: <http://www.well.com/user/gdisf>

Vietnam: Land of the Ascending Dragon. (video, 54 minutes). See the Mar/Apr issue of *Destination: Vietnam*, or go to <http://www.well.com/user/gdisf>

<http://www.well.com/user/gdisf/festival.html>
"Traditional Festivals of Vietnam" Barbara Cohen, *Destination: Vietnam* (Jan/Feb 95). Photo essay.

<http://www.well.com/user/gdisf/tet.html>
"Tet." *Destination: Vietnam* (Jan/Feb 95). Photo essay about Tet.

<http://www.well.com/user/gdisf/vanmieu.html>
"Van Mieu—Temple of Literature" *Destination: Vietnam* (Sep/Oct 94).

<http://www.well.com/user/gdisf/cham1.html>
"Cham Museum." *Destination: Vietnam* (May/June 95).

Vietnam pictures archive
Internet: sunsite.unc.edu/vietnam/vnpic.html
E-mail: gallery@viet.net
Internet: VietGATE—www.saigon.com
E-mail: vietweb@saigon.com

Viet Magazine Online (in Vietnamese).
255 N. Market St. #124, San Jose CA 95110.
(408) 977-0586, fax (408) 977-0588.
E-mail: vietmag@saigon.com
Internet: <http://www.viet.net/vietmag>

VPS fonts for DOS and Mac, from <ftp://media.mit.edu/pub/Vietnet/VPS>
Fonts do not require a special keyboard file, but there's no immediate sense of why characters are located on the various keys; it'd be a difficult keyboard to memorize. TrueType, sharp looking.

VPSabc—Multimedia program to teach Vietnamese alphabet to children, for DOS or MAC. Same internet address as above.

hoi/nga lookup table (for DOS). Allows users to quickly look up the correct tone for 700 easily confused words.

Internet: <ftp://media.mit.edu/pub/Vietnet>

Cultural Intersection Working Group, a non-profit group working to provide access to authentic Vietnamese materials online, including: *Giao Diem* CD ROM (\$15). E-mail: truc@ceramics.mot.com

Voyage through the Motherland CD ROM (Pham Duy multimedia). CoLoa Publishing House, PO Box 32313, San Jose CA 95132. (408) 251-4561.

List of Vietnamese organizations (non-governmental organizations).
jbuquoi@unicomp.net
<http://www.viet.net/ngos.html>

Saigon—photo essay
<http://www.saigon.com/gallery/saigon.html>

San Jose Mercury's Vietnam bureau. Articles filed by SJM's Vietnam correspondent.
<http://www.sjmercury.com/vietnam/viet1.html>

WLR Cassidy & Associates. Commercial consultant on issues of Southeast Asia, with a focus on crime and gangs.
Internet: <http://deltanet.com/users/wcassidy/>
E-mail: wcassidy@deltanet.com

Bui Doi—Life Like Dust (1994).
16 mm, 29 minutes. Urban Nomad Productions. *Life as a Natoma Boy.* Study Guide to *Bui Doi*. Nick Rothenburg.
E-mail: rothenb@scf.usc.edu
Internet: <http://cwis.usc.edu/dept/elab/buidoi>

Vietnam non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This list of NGOs in Vietnam is sponsored by Saigon.COM, a public service of TLsoft. Please send additions and corrections to
E-mail: vnngo-info@saigon.com
Internet: <http://www.viet.net/ngos.html>
This is a lengthy list of organizations, their addresses, and short descriptions.



Found this in the NY Times venue on America Online. Other pix, historical documents.

Trail Through the Mists

Houa Vue Moua and Barbara J. Rolland

In 1954, when France finally gave up all claim to Laos, she left behind a country at war. Communism was on the move. The King of Laos looked for help to the United States. The U.S., worried about the spread of Communism, offered its services—its money and its advisors, but not its soldiers. They began by helping refugees that had been forced to give up their homes. In the final years of the war, Yong Kay Moua was one of those who worked for USAID, distributing the food, pans for cooking, medicine, clothing, blankets, tools, and shelter needed by the victims of war.

The Hmong, known as excellent soldiers, were recruited to form a 'Secret Army.' American military personnel trained them and paid them; in return, the Hmong were to make the regular transport of supplies along the Ho Chi Minh Trail by the North Vietnamese impossible. They were to keep the Americans informed and fight a guerrilla war that Americans were not equipped for.

In 1975, when the Americans announced that they were leaving Laos and Vietnam, the Hmong met again with the same Americans to try to decide their future. Forty thousand families of soldiers and employees of USAID would be admitted to the U.S.; the rest were to remain in the refugee camps until the first Hmong could become sponsors for the others.

Today, as refugee camps in Thailand are being closed and refugees unable to come to the U.S. or France are being forced to return to their Laotian homeland, the struggle continues. Many of the Hmong introduced in this book have found new lives in the United

States. A large number have also died. Others, like the Colonel, have returned to Laos to carry on the struggle. The final pages of this book contain a directory giving information on those whose present situation is known.

As for Houa and Kay Moua, they, along with their families, have continued their leadership roles in Wisconsin. They are still working to help their people find greater security and happiness. At the same time, they believe it is also important for their people to keep alive the culture and the traditions of the Hmong. They want their children to have a past as well as a future. And they want others in the world to understand them.

For information on ordering this book, please contact:

Robin and Bea Vue-Benson
1066 - 27th Ave SE, Apartment D
Minneapolis, MN 55414
E-Mail: vueb0001@gold.tc.umn.edu

Hmong Arts, Books, & Crafts

Yuepheng L. Xiong,
341 University Avenue West,
St. Paul, MN 55103. (612) 293-0019

A Hmong book store operated by Hmong! This industrious couple has located books that have been out of circulation for years (e.g., "Akha and Meau" by Bernatzik). Call for a catalog-list. They carry "Trail Through the Mists," described above, plus lots more.

The Whispering Cloth: A Refugee's Story

Pegi Deitz Shea (Caroline House, 1995)

A young Hmong girl in a Thai refugee camp finds the story within herself to create her own pa'ndau.

Resources

Back Fire: The CIA's Secret War in Laos and Its Link to the Vietnam War

Roger Warner (Simon & Schuster, 1995), \$25.

During the past summer in a hot and muggy Wisconsin, Roger Warner shared his slides and knowledge of the Hmong during the CIA years in Laos, and we were excited by the depth of Roger's knowledge of and experience with the topic. He was co-author with Haing Ngor: A Cambodian Odyssey and has written for Life, Smithsonian, and other magazines.

This new book is "an extraordinary account of the war in Laos from 1960 to 1973. He gives life and form to characters of the period, and provides insight to the complex reasons for the American involvement in Laos and for the eventual flight of the Hmong from the communist victors. *Library Journal* (August 1995) recommends the book, with a hearty, "given that literature on Laos is so scant, and with Warner's excellent perspective, this work is highly recommended for academic and public libraries.

Hmong Voices in Montana

Susan Lindbergh Miller, editor, with Bounthavy Kiatoukasy, Tou Yang (Missoula Museum of the Arts, 1992).

Beautiful layout: history, Jerry Daniels, "five stories" (Moua Cha and Mai Lee, Nao Tou Moua, Lue Yang, Ia Vang, Bli Lee), refugee issues, community, bilingual program, music, health and healing, hemp clothing, gardening and farming, hunting and fishing, the Hmong home, the shaman, new year, wedding, funeral, cemetery, costumes and needlework, children, and story cloths.



Renew!

Current subscribers will receive this issue of Context. Names of those who do not re-subscribe will be removed from the mailing list after this issue. Still only \$10 (6 issues).

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- #9411 *Parent Involvement in School: A Handbook for Language Minority Parents & School Personnel (Vietnamese Glossary & Summary)*, Huynh Dinh Te, 1994. \$5.00. No carton discount.
- #9410 *Amerasians from Vietnam: A California Study*, Chung & Le, 1994. \$7.00. No carton discount.
- #9409 *Proceedings on the Conference on Champa*, 1994. \$7.00. No carton discount.
- #9308 *Selected Resources: People from Cambodia, Laos & Vietnam*. Lewis, ed. \$5.00. No carton discount.
- #9207 *Minority Cultures of Laos: Kammu, Lua', Lahu, Hmong, and Mien*. Lewis; Kam Raw, Vang, Elliott, Matisoff, Yang, Crystal, Saepharn. 1992. 402 pages \$15.00 (carton discount \$12.00, 16 per carton)
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- #S8802 *Handbook for Teaching Khmer-Speaking Students* Ouk, Huffiman, 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, 1994. \$9.00. Carton discount: \$7.00.
- #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)

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#R002	Lao Primer	\$4.00	#R007	Hmong dictionary, Xiong,	
#R003	Lao 1st Gr. Reader	\$5.00		(Hmoob Ntsuab)	\$30.00
#R004	Lao 2nd Gr. Reader	\$5.50	#R008	1992 Faire poster	\$3.00
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The league conducts annual meetings with other countries in an organisation collectively known as the ASEAN dialogue partners. ASEAN +3 adds China, Japan, and South Korea. The formal summits are held in three days. The 12th ASEAN Summit was originally set to be hosted in Cebu in the Philippines in December 2006. However, on 8 December, organizers decided to move the summit schedule to January 2007 due to Typhoon Seniang hitting the area. Metro Cebu jointly hosted various events of the summit. Main article: Accession of East Timor to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The new nation of East Timor, previously ruled by Indonesia, has had a long struggle with ASEAN.