The Music of the Hmong People of Laos

BOUA XOU MUA

I. New Year's Songs
QEEJ KAWM NTAWW (9:38)
GAENG SCHOOL SONG
LUG TXAJ SIB DLEEV (9:44)
COURTSHIP SONG BY LEE MUA — LOVE SONG
LUG TXAJ UA NYAAB (6:53)
COURTSHIP SONG BY BOUA XOU MUA — THE WAY OF BECOMING A WIFE

II. Courtship Instruments
TSAAJ NTSAWS (1:59) DJA NJER — LOVE SONG (Fipple Flute)
TSAJ NPIAIM (1:08) DJA MBLAI (Free Reed Flute)
TSNUAB NPOOJ (1:35) DZUA BLAUNG (Leaf)
NCAAS (2:49) NJA (Jew's Harp)

III. Wedding Songs
ZAJJ TSHOOB — CEEL TOOM NAM TXIV (4:07)
ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE PARENTS OF THE GROOM
ZAJJ TSHOOB — QEB TSOOG TUAM NTSAA (6:36)
ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE PARENTS OF THE BRIDE

IV. Funeral Music
QEEJ NQUG ROOJ (7:14) GAENG EVENING SONG: PULL THE TABLE
QEEJ TAAG MO (5:45) GAENG MIDNIGHT SONG

V. Song of the Refugee
TSAJ NTSAWS — TSI TEB TSAWS CHAW (1:35)
REFUGEE SONG

Documentary Arts was founded in 1985 as a non-profit corporation to broaden public knowledge and appreciation of the arts of different cultures in all media.

This compilation ©:1995
Documentary Arts, Inc.
P.O. Box 140244
Dallas, Texas 75214

This recording was produced by Alan Govenar and edited by Nancy Lamb, and was funded in part by the Texas Commission on the Arts, the Folk and Traditional Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Regional Arts and Culture Council in Portland, Oregon.

Art Direction and Design by Ann Fell.
INTRODUCTION

Boua Xou Mua is a spiritual leader and former village chief of the Hmong, a hill-tribes-people from the mountains of Southeast Asia. Among the Hmong people there are several sub-groups, and Boua is a member of the so-called Blue Hmong. The Blue Hmong have their own dialect and cultural traditions.

Boua arrived in the United States in 1978 at the age of sixty-three and currently lives in Portland, Oregon. As a refugee from the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) secret war in Laos, he joined thousands of his people in making perhaps one of the most severe cultural transitions of any group in history. Over the last sixteen years Boua has stood in proud defiance against the pressures of assimilation and has been a leader in the preservation of Hmong traditional music and culture. The music on this recording carries the listener through the Hmong life cycle, displaying Boua’s artistry in the traditional genres of interpersonal artistry in the traditional genres of interpersonal 
istyles, and by the time the Hmong clan leaders, Boua, Thao, daughter Lee, struggled to flee their homeland. Finally, on the night of August 11, 1978, Boua and two of his sons were recruited into what is now known as the CIA’s secret, but unsuccessful, operation to emigrate to the United States. The killing of Hmong clan leaders, Boua, Thao, daughter Lee, and two of his sons were recruited into what is now known as the CIA’s secret, but unsuccessful, operation to emigrate to the United States.

HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY

Prior to the 1950s, the Hmong had no written language. History was transmitted primarily in an oral tradition and, to some extent, was recorded by Chinese. The casualty rate of Hmong soldiers was one hundred times more than that of their American counterparts, and by the time the United States pulled out of Laos in 1973, Boua himself had been wounded twice. His brother, Boua Thao, daughter Lee, and two of his sons were recruited into what is now known as the CIA’s secret, but unsuccessful, operation to emigrate to the United States.

When Boua performed, the audience responded enthusiastically and I realized that he was a living master of Hmong music and dance. Later, with the support of the Folk and Traditional Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts, I developed an apprenticeship program to involve Boua with other Hmong and Lao refugees in the perpetuation of their cultural traditions. In 1984, I nominated Boua for a National Heritage Fellowship, which he received the following year. Since that time Boua has continued to serve as a teacher and leader in the Hmong community in Portland.

This recording is the result of a performance given by Boua at the Meyerson Symphony Center as part of the 1991 Dallas Folk Festival. Folklorist Alan Govenar invited Boua to perform with four other National Heritage Fellows in a memorial concert for Alexander H. Moore, a Heritage Fellow from Dallas who had died in 1989.

During his five-day stay in Dallas, Boua was accompanied by his son Lee, who worked as his apprentice and translator. In addition to the performance at the Meyerson Symphony Center, Govenar presented Boua and Lee in a public program for Asian refugees at the Multicultural Community Center, where Boua was reunited with Kai Moua, a distant relative whom he had not seen since he was forced to leave Laos in 1976.

The recordings on this CD were produced by Alan Govenar at the Announcer’s Booth Studio in Richardson, Texas and edited by Nancy Lamb. Additional recordings with Lee Moua I produced in Portland, where I also worked with Lee in the transcription and translation of the song texts.

Jan DeWeese – June, 1995

being robbed of their money and jewelry, the Mua family crossed the border into Thailand. There they were placed in the Pha Nam refugee camp, where they lived for two years with the other Hmong people who were fortunate enough to escape from the war-torn mountains of Laos.

In the spring of 1978 the Mua family was granted permission to emigrate to the United States, where they were resettled in Portland, Oregon later that year. Life in Portland was more harsh than Boua had imagined. Many of the Americans he met were suspicious and openly discriminated against him and his family. Boua’s daughter was assaulted, and he himself got into a fight with one of his neighbors. These problems, combined with the difficulties of learning the English language and the insensitivity to Hmong culture in the schools, were almost insurmountable. In the years since, Boua, however, has persevered to deal with Hmong culture in the schools, were almost insurmountable. In the years since, Boua, however, has persevered to deal with constraints and obstacles of American life.

I met Boua in the winter of 1980, when I was organizing a public concert of musicians and dancers from the Asian refugee communities in the Portland area. At that time, I was working with refugee children in the Portland schools and became aware of the general lack of understanding of Hmong culture. Through my encounters with Boua’s children, I began to learn about the Hmong and wanted to meet Boua himself. Finally, after visiting Boua at his home, I invited him to participate in the concert program.

When Boua performed, the audience responded enthusiastically and I realized that he was a living master of Hmong music and dance. Later, with the support of the Folk and Traditional Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts, I developed an apprenticeship program to involve Boua with other Hmong and Lao refugees in the perpetuation of their cultural traditions. In 1984, I nominated Boua for a National Heritage Fellowship, which he received the following year. Since that time Boua has continued to serve as a teacher and leader in the Hmong community in Portland.

This recording is the result of a performance given by Boua at the Meyerson Symphony Center as part of the 1991 Dallas Folk Festival. Folklorist Alan Govenar invited Boua to perform with four other National Heritage Fellows in a memorial concert for Alexander H. Moore, a Heritage Fellow from Dallas who had died in 1989.

During his five-day stay in Dallas, Boua was accompanied by his son Lee, who worked as his apprentice and translator. In addition to the performance at the Meyerson Symphony Center, Govenar presented Boua and Lee in a public program for Asian refugees at the Multicultural Community Center, where Boua was reunited with Kai Moua, a distant relative whom he had not seen since he was forced to leave Laos in 1976.

The recordings on this CD were produced by Alan Govenar at the Announcer’s Booth Studio in Richardson, Texas and edited by Nancy Lamb. Additional recordings with Lee Moua I produced in Portland, where I also worked with Lee in the transcription and translation of the song texts.
Music for Intergenerational Communication

I. New Year’s Songs

The gaeng, multiple free-reed mouth organ is unique to Hmong culture. It is made from six curved bamboo pipes which are inserted into a wooden wind-chest serving as a reservoir for the player’s breath. The gaeng’s primary function is to perform the lengthy funeral te~1S, which are described below, but it is also heard during the December New Year’s activities to accompany the player’s acrobatic dance and relay secular messages of the variety Boua has composed here.

This son g expresses perhaps the refugee parents’ most elemental feelings, those regarding the immeasurable and inevitable effects of Western education on their children’s future relationship to Hmong tradition.

We begin this recording at the ‘ew Year because in the Hmong life cycle it is during this relaxed time, with the rice harvest in, that the feelings of puberty are given official sanction and release. The very first utterance of song in Hmong culture is driven by the instincts of courtship. The youthful pair converse flirtatiously through an improvised ritual language called lu tza, following well-honed poetic rules that employ a rhyme scheme for building suspense in anticipation of the beautiful sounding rhyming words. Drawing from a timeless repertoire of nature metaphors and mythical scenarios, this sweet serenading accompanies a game in which multiple couples stand facing each other and toss a small hand ball with each line of poetry. As the practice of exogamous marriage, that is, outside of one’s clan, is common Hmong law, one village invites another to their New Year often from mountains and days away. It is only appropriate that Boua’s son Lee sings the first of these two lu tza, for he has just recently won the heart of a California Hmong woman who is now his wife in Portland. Boua’s song is of a variety of lu tza that continues to provide expression of many kinds of emotion throughout life.

[Continued]
He has to continue his education in another town, far away, where Hmong language is not spoken.

TXAJ NKAUJ TUB LIS TXAJ is able to complete his studies there.

After completed his education, TXAJ NKAUJ TUB LIS TXAJ is coming back to this country here. Whose country? Coming back to this country. Whose country? TXAJ NKAUJ is leaving his mother and father ahead.

TXAJ NKAUJ is leaving his brothers and younger brothers behind.

TXAJ NKAUJ's mother, TXAJ NKAUJ's father are searching for TXAJ NKAUJ, but cannot find him. They are coming to search for TXAJ NKAUJ, but cannot reach him.

TXAJ NKAUJ's mother, TXAJ NKAUJ's father think sadly, their hearts broken.

LUG TXAJ SIB DLEEY

Cab havu... ntxhais nkauj quas taab. Hli taij thwb thi, zaaj txig zaaj nkawm sawv vij hli. Yuav vuav zog zaaj txig zaaj nkawm cew plaub ntsauab. Dlaaj dlee pleeg nkauj nraug nuav has zoo zoo luaj nua. Luas leej tub nqeg taaj txug. Koj nyoob nraug ti muaj sab los tuaj tso ca muas. Caag yuav nmuaj sab taij luag quas ntsoo, koj puas yuav nqeg rooj nqeg tog tsua peb pleeg nkauj ntsauab nuav thaam ntxhaj quas ntxhog txug taaj tuaj nuxas kev yuav nmuaj moob kib ciub.


Cab havu... Pleeg nkauj ntsauab nuav, luas leej tub tas ca muab dlej ab lug tov caww dlaw. Pleeg nkauj nraug luas leej tub nqeg nqeg tuaj tejg mej tsaa b teb tuaj rooji nrtg nuav. Luas leej tub yuav pum tuaj nkaui cwb nqeg nkaui tuaj los ni tsi pum tuaj nam ib tug le kws koj u le ntxim tuaj laaj lees leej tub nqeg plaub caug yim moob nplooj plaw.

Cab havu... Ntxhais nkaui quas taab. Laav ncuwab kaaw lawg toj suab. Ni yuav kau laam luuj lug peh havu paag dlej teb. Ntxhais nkaui quas taab dliaj dlee kev pleeg nkaui nraug muav zoo tuaj lanaj nua ib ni yuav nmuaj tuaj tuaj suab kev seev nyoob nqeg tuaj moog tsaaw tsihj nqeg tuaj moog thwaaw loo los ni tsi cuag le kws koj nynob luag tuaj kws es kws nyoob tuaj nkaus kib. Ib ni le noj sibqay nyoob tsow tuaj moog si hluh.

Pleeg nkauj nraug nuav ca lauv ncuwab kaaw lawg toj suab. Ni yuav kau laam luuj lug peh havu paag dlej dlaw. Pleeg nkauj nraug nuav ib ni has zoo tuaj nua ib ni yuav nmuaj tuaj tuaj suab kev seev nyoob tuaj moog thwaaw tsihj nqeg tuaj moog thwaaw thox los ni tsi cuag le kws koj nyoob tuaj kws es kws nyoob luag tuaj koj. Ib le noj sig hluh nyoob tsow qab tuaj moog sibqay.

Ca havu... ntxhais nkaui quas taab, ntshe muaj hluh dlaaj dlee tuaj lug sib tuaj, ce ntshe ib yuav zais tsuj zais neev tuaj ntawm tab. Ib muaj ua lawm ib yig neej u nam txhab miiv txhij luag kws hluh ib plaubcaug yim moob npooj sab.

Caag npleg nkauj nraug nuav, dlaaj dlee has zoo tuaj nua. Muaj hluh ib dlaaj dlee tuaj lug sib tuaj, ce ib le yuav zais tsuj zais neev tuaj ntawm tab. Ib muaj ua lawm ib yig neej yuav nam txhab miiv txhij luag hluh ib plaub caug yim moong nplooj plaw.

Zoo nyoog luaj xeex.
COURTSHIP SONG BY LEE MUA – LOVE SONG

The moon shines.
A pair of dragons rise and circle around the moon.
A pair of green dragon feathers are caught.
Our relationship is going so well, I travel such a long way here.
If your heart does not want it, put it away.
If your heart needs it, are you going to pull up some chairs for us to sit down on and talk about marriage?

The moon shines.
A pair of dragons rise and circle around the moon.
A pair of dragon feathers shine.
If your heart does not want it, put it away.
If your heart needs it, are you going to pull up some chairs for us to sit down on and talk about marriage?

This relationship, I say, let us put bitter water mixed with alcohol.
I come such a long way to your place, and I see many girls, but I see only you are pleasing to my forty-eight livers.
This relationship, I say, let us put alcohol mixed with bitter water.
I come such a long way to your place, and I see many girls, but I see only you are worth my forty-eight hearts.

A Love Ncuaab bird sings over by the deep pond.
This relationship, we can talk as sweet and as much as we want, but it is not as good as if we were together.
We will eat and teach together and love each other.

A Love Ncuaab bird sings over by the shallow pond.
This relationship, we can talk as sweet and as much as we want, but it is not as good as if we were together.
We will eat and love together and teach each other.

When we have each other, we will hide our footsteps under the skirt.
Life, as we live on, will not rot our forty-eight hearts.
When we have each other, we will hide our footsteps under the feet.
Life, as we live on, will not rot our forty-eight livers.

How happy I am!
COURTSHIP SONG BY BOUA XOU MUA – THE WAY OF BECOMING A WIFE

The girl thought that she does not want to become a wife. Still, the great grandmother already created the way, and the great grandfather already created the path.

The girl thought that she does not want to become a wife. Still, the great grandmother already created the path, and the great grandfather already created the way.

If the girl becomes a wife and moves toward the door, she will see the entire path that the grandparents created. When the girl becomes a wife, she misses her parents so much and remembers when she still lived with them and got up to cook dinner.

If the girl becomes a wife and moves toward the door, she will see the entire path that the grandparents created. When the girl becomes a wife, she thinks in her heart quietly that she misses her parents so much and remembers when she still lived with them and got up to cook breakfast.

This year the girl becomes a wife and moves toward the river. She sees the Chinese stream flow off the mountain. She becomes a wife and misses her parents through her whole life whenever she works.

This year the girl becomes a wife and moves toward the river. She sees the Chinese stream flow so far away. She becomes a wife and misses her parents through her whole life whenever she labors.

The girl becomes a wife. She moves through the village and sees the village people standing together. She becomes a wife and she does not hear anyone call the same name as her parents.

The girl becomes a wife. She moves through the village and sees the village people standing in a group. She becomes a wife and she does not hear anyone voice sound the same as her parents.

(continued)
This year the girl becomes a wife. She moves across the bare mountain on a path of red soil. She is leaving her parents and is going to accept the other people as her true parents.

This year the girl becomes a wife. She moves across the bare mountain on a path of black soil. She is leaving her parents and is going to accept the other people as her real parents.

There is sadness in the heart.

II. Courtship Instruments

As it is often the case that the young person is too shy to sing the love poem directly, Hmong culture has devised an elegant means for masking the raw vocal utterance. To flirt safely from a distance, the shy ones can play bamboo flutes, sending comprehensible messages due to the tonal character of the Hmong language. Each of eight tones of the spoken language can completely change the meaning of the syllable it effects, and these contours correspond to the pitches on the flutes, of which there are two varieties, the *djä njer* (with a flapped mouthpiece) and the *djä mbly* (with a single free reed). But if out in the jungle without a flute and needing to send a message, a banana leaf called *dzua bluang* can be used by curling it under the tongue to form the scale. However, there is no Hmong text or translation for the leaf. The final communications of courtship are sent on a metal Jew's harp called *njà* which resonates to the vowels of the mouth cavity and the wooings which are too intimate to translate.

TSAAJ NTSAWS

TSAAJ SIB DLEEV

Khua koy sab los tsi khua ntxhais nkaa see nrug li taab.
Es ... Khua kuv sab yuav caj los yuav tuag, koy yuav yuav paub los tsi paub?
Es ... koy yuav dleev tiv leej tub los tsi dleev nam ntxhais nkaa see nrug le taab.

Aws khua koy sab los tsi khua, aws ntxhais nkaa see nrug li taab.
Khua kuv sab yuav caj los yuav tuag, koy yuav paub los tsi paub?
Khua kuv sab yuav caj los yuav tuag, ntxhais kuv yuav tuag koy yuav paub los tsi paub?
Es ntxhais koy yuav dleev tiv leej tub los tsi dleev.

*DJä NJER* – *LOVE SONG*

Are you full of desire or not, girl?
I am so full of desire my heart is broken.
Do you know or not?
Do you want to speak of love with me or not, girl?
I am so full of desire my heart is broken.
Do you know or not?
Do you long for me or not, girl?
I am so mournful, I may die, do you know or not?
Do you want to speak of love with me, or not?

TSAAJ NPLAIM
TSAAJ SIB DLEEY

Ntum taag quas ncu miv nttxhais nkauj moob.
Ntum ntum ni miv pum moob, puas yuav khua koi
sab los ts i khua hos miv nttxhais nkauj moob?
Miv pum moob, khua kuv sab yuav cai los khua kuv sab yuav tuag.
Khuv kuv yuav tuag, koi yuav moog koi, koi yuav tseg kuv ca.
Es khua kuv sab ua hjaj nua es koi yuav paub los ts i paub?
Khua kuv lub sab ua hjaj nua es kuv yuav moog kuv es kuv tseg koi ca.

DJA MBLAI

Hmong girl, are you feeling lonely? Maybe not as much as I do.
I am so lonely I could end up a suicide. I am so lonely I could die.
You will leave me and leave me behind. I feel so lonely, do
you know or not? I feel so lonely, what are you going to say to me?

Music for Intergenerational Communication

III. Wedding Songs

If the courtship proves successful, the young couple’s families will set into motion the highly ritualized negotiations for the traditional wedding. The Hmong laws for marriage are very strict, and all must listen now to the ancestors as they speak through the prescribed texts and actions to insure that the union be blessed. The parents of the bride and the groom each arrange for a representative to facilitate these communications leading up to (as well as formally closing) the three-day ceremony with feasts at both at the villages of both families. A third legal agent coordinates the proceedings of the ceremony itself. All of this is conducted in song. In the two pieces presented here, the gravity of the marriage commitment is relayed by the symbols of the bull and of the umbrella, representing respectively the elemental power of the instinct for procreation and the security inherent in married life and ancestral blessing.

ZAAJ TSIIHOOB – CEEB TOOM NAM TXIV

Ib hiv chiv yig tuaj las kuv nam kuv txiv meb tog nua.
Zoo li cuaj hnuh meb tsav phwb nyog meb txuj kaab kug.
Yim naj es meb tsav phwb li phi lawm meb txuj kaab tsioob.
Meb txiv nyuj li pwon li twom li plaww lub hil nkwam xyog.
Cuaj hnuh tes meb tsav phwb nyog meb txuj kaab tsioob.
Yim naj es meb li phwb li kho lawg meb txuj kaab kug.
Yaus meb txiv nyuj le pwon li tww meb tsav hnuh.
Es meb tsav muab tau meb txiv nyuj li pwon cob nkauj tsav lawg laaj lub laag
quas yau ib tej qub npaaub.
Laaj lub laab quas yau ib le lawg tau meb txiv
nyuj li pwon tuaj moog nce kaab huas.
Nse meb tsav muab tau meb txiv nyuj li pwon cob li nkauj tsav laaj lub taag
yau ib tej qub teg.
Ib le lawg tau meb txiv nyuj li pwon moog nce kev huas.
Laaj lub laag yau ib lawg tau meb txiv
nyuj li pwon moog khi nkauj tsav
kuv nam lw kw kw txiv meb tog u nam tog yeeg ntvaab.
Nse kuv nam kw txiv meb
tog u ts i txais nyog laaj lub laag yau ib lub hil tsioj tsioob ce
ib le lawg tau meb txiv nyuj li pwon nrog tsq qab hos.
WEDDING

ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE PARENTS OF THE GROOM

Parents of the groom, in nine days you want your wedding. In eight nights you need your wedding. At your wedding your bull will come out of the bamboo fence. In nine days you need your wedding. In eight nights you want your marriage ceremony. Your bull will stamp in the dirt and walk around. You place your bull into our Laaj Tub Laag Quas Yau arms. We Laaj Tub Laag Quas Yau will chase your bull onto the path. You place your bull into our Laaj Tub Laag Quas Yau hands. We Laaj Tub Laag Quas Yau will chase your bull onto the path. We Laaj Tub Laag Quas Yau will take your bull and tie it to the overhead storage space in the house of the parents of the bride. If the parents of the bride do not accept this wedding, then we will chase your bull back down the path. If the parents of the bride accept this wedding, then we will have a good daughter-in-law for you.

We Laaj Tub Laag Quas Yau will take your bull and tie it to the center post of the house of the parents of the bride. If the parents of the bride do not accept this marriage, then we will chase your bull back down the trail. If the parents of the bride accept this marriage, then we will have a good wife for your son.

Think about it and do not feel angry.

ZAAJ TSHOOB - QEB TSOOG TUAM NTSSA

If hiv chiv yig tuaaj las kuv nam kwv kviv meb toq nua os. Laaj tub laag quas yau ib nyob ib cuaj hnuub kev tuaaj taub quas nrug, kuv nam kwv kviv meb toq u xani chiv yauw pw khu, meb tsua nim su li zoi tuaaj ntsuab naab es ntses cwi li taww ceeb nrug hu taww. Laam tub laag quas yau ib nyob taag ib yim mo kev tuaaj taub quas zaag es kuv nam kwv kviv meb toq u tsua xani chiv yauw pw tshoob, meb tsua nim su li zoi tuaaj ntsuab naab ntses cwi li taww ceeb lug hu poob hos.

Zoo li es laam tub laag quas yau ib xaan ib tsua tsi tuaaj es muaj tub li tao cee yauw muab naab, muaj ntschais li tag yauw muab qua.

If thum tsi nyog lub tshjeex laj tsi nyog kws lub yig es.

Laaj tub laag yau ib nqee sua su nee tuaaj txug, kuv nam kwv kviv meb tsua tsaws nyog. Kuv kviv tsua tsaws nyog pwj caw tsua laaj laaj tub laag li yau ib hos. Xyeey novg txuj kaab tshoob kev kug tsua laag yau ib tuaaj. Kuv nam tsua zoob sab, kuv nam tsua tua nyog taww pju qaab tsua laaj tub laag yau ib noj es. Xyeey ngyaw taww txuj kaab tshoob kev kug tsua ib noj.

Kuv nam kwv kviv meb tsua muab tau lub kaus dlub kau li vius cob (continued)
Laaj Tub Laag Yau
tub laag yau ib tej qub npaab. Ib coj tau nkauj kaus moog ntoi kaab.

Kuv nam kuv txiv meh tsua muab tau lub kaus dlub kaus li vaas cob nkauj tsua lawg laaj tub laag yau ib tej qub teg. Ib tsua coj kaus moog ntoi ke.

Laaj tub laag yau ib kwv tau lub kaus dlub kaus li vaam tuaq txub ntsaag taj ni poob ntsaag tug. Muaj puq li ts i ib pum tau kuv nam kuv kws txiv meh lub rooj taag li tu ntsa nyog nam tug ntsa xyoob. Laaj tub laag li yau ib tsua lauj xwb teg quaas naas nrug dlawj ts i poob.

Laaj tub laag yau ib tsua kwv tau lub kaus dlub kaus li vaam tuaq txub ntsaag taj poob ntsaag tu. Muaj puq li ts i ib pum tau kuv nam kuv kws txiv meh lub rooj taag li tu ntsa nyog lawm nam tug phoo nyaj. Es laaj tub laag yau ib tsua lauj xwb tex quaas naam dlaj.

Laaj tub laag yau ib tsua nqeg sua nqeg tuaq txug, laaj tub laag yau ib tsua ts i pum qaab vaam khom. Ib tsua cwj theeb kws sawv saas suas saas li thawv kuv nam kws kws txiv meh lug laag nyaj laag kub le dlawg quaas hawv. Laaj tub laag yau ib tsua ts i theeb kws sawv saampuas saam li tho kuv nam kuv txiv meh lug laag nyaj laag kub le dhuag li hlo.

Laaj tub laag yau ib nqeg tuaq txug. Laaj tub laag yau ib ts i pum qaab vaam kho, vaam kho quaas li ntsow kuv nam kuv txiv meh muab meh tug yuv sij lug txug dwawg. Meb lub roob taag li tu le nplaam tuab li plawg.

Laaj tub laag yau ib ts i pum qaab vaam kho, vaam kho li ntsow kuv nam kuv txiv meh muab tau meh tug yuv sij lug txug ncu es meb lub rooj taag li tu le dhuam tuaq tuab quaas dlua.

Meb qeb nyog meb lub roob taag li tu quaaj lig qeeg rov moog ti hauv es laaj tub laag yau ib le tau nyog lawg txuj kev tuaq.

Wedding Song:
Parents of the bride, we Laaj Tub Laag Yau live nine days away from the parents of the groom. They prepared lunch and came to us. We live eight nights away from the parents of the groom. They prepared lunch and walked to our place and asked us for help.

We Laaj Tub Laag Yau think that we do not want to come. but if there is a son, he is going to have a wife, and if there is a daughter, she is going to have a husband. This being so, we cannot hold back this tradition of marriage.

We Laaj Tub Laag Yau went to the house of the parents of the groom. The father was so happy in his life, he brought his alcohol for us to drink. He entrusts us with the rules for walking through the wedding ceremony.

We Laaj Tub Laag Yau went to the house of the parents of the groom. The mother was so happy inside her heart, she killed a chicken for us to eat. She will have us take charge of the seeding ceremony. The parents of the groom put an umbrella into our arms.

We Laaj Tub Laag Yau took the umbrella across the land. We say the door of the parents of the bride's house tied shut with a long piece of bamboo. We used our hands to shake it, but it did not drop.

We Laaj Tub Laag Yau took the umbrella across the land. We saw the door of the parents of the bride's house shut tight with nails. We used our hands to try to open it, but could not.

We Laaj Tub Laag Yau did not know where to get help, so we hope that your long piece of bamboo will drop and the nails will come out. We also await your bringing the keys, so the door can open. When the door swings open, it will be heard way up the canyon. Then we can walk through.

Please consider this and do not be angry.
IV. Funeral Music

Like that for the wedding, the music that accompanies continuously the three to six day funeral rite is also strictly memorized. In addition to eulogizing the deceased, these texts provide a timely recharging of the Hmong cosmology into the hearts and minds of the surviving generation, helping heal the wound of death by opening channels of support from the great lineage of those who lived before. As relayed above, the songs are blown on the gaeng bamboo pipes, encoded in a mesh of drones which makes comprehensible to the soul of the deceased the guidance they offer through the celestial world. The player’s spinning dance is designed to confuse any evil spirits chasing the soul on its horseback journey up into the ancestral abode.

QEEJ NQUG ROOJ

Taug nyuj qeeg tuag nyuj qeeg
Yuav tsaus ntuj moog taav nuav, tsau zua moog taav nuav.
Pv yuav huav, piv yuav huav. Puj quas nag npauj kaab ntsais
lis tsab yuav dlua toj, los nraug kaab ntsai ntsai li tsab yuav dlua peg.
Puj quas na Tub Li Txu Coj Li Thaww teg quas lawm yuav lug taw hub
tho loom cij teh tsaaq kaab quas lug pum quas nam leej tub tuag tej
hauv muag ncoo su.
Pum quas na Tub Li Txu Coj Li Thaww teg quas laum yuav lug nqug lug
li rooj los plabt thais ceg la tsua to taag. Yuav lug nqug lug li rooj las
plabt thais tau tsua ntsaah tsev.
Pum quas na Tub Lis Txu Coj Li Thaww teg yuas laum yuav moog hu leej
txiv coj dlaab zau quas ncoa tuaj peg rooj. Los yuav moog hu yawm
txiv lang zau dlua tuaj sau tog ho ...Puj quas na yuav moog hu leej yuav
xeav tuaj xiv lug saw quas ntsai tuaj ntsaag tuaj.

Qaaaj li rooj quas tsu txawb? Qaaaj li rooj ih niti ntsaah niti tuham lug txawb.
Sau li rooj qsis tsu txawb? Sau li rooj ih niti ntsab niti txawb lug txawb.
Qaaaj li rooj quas tsu puaj? Qaaaj li rooj las cuaj laaw tsuaj las yiv

GAENG EVENING SONG: PULL THE TABLE

The evening is here, the darkness has come. The lights of the female fireflies flash and pass out of sight. The lights of the male fireflies flash and disappear.
The hands of the directors of the funeral ceremony are going to light the oil lamp. It shines on the head of the deceased person.
The hands of the directors of the funeral ceremony are going to pull the table with four legs over next to the deceased person, are going to pull the table with four feet over into the middle of the room.
The hands of the directors of the funeral ceremony will place the person who will serve food and alcohol to the deceased person at the first chair. They will place the person who will perform the legal rites at the second chair.
The hands of the directors of the funeral ceremony will place the two persons who will ask the questions about the deceased person across the table from the first and second chairs.

Under the table, what is sitting there? Under the table, there is a bowl with rice.
On top of the table, what is sitting there? On top of the table, there is a bowl with rice.
Under the table, what is sitting there? Under the table, there is alcohol.

(continued)
On top of the table, what is sitting there? On top of the table, there is alcohol.

The directors of the funeral ceremony now place the person who will serve food and alcohol to the deceased person at the first chair. They now place the person who will perform the legal rites at the second chair.

The directors of the funeral ceremony now place the two persons who will ask the questions about the deceased person across the table from the first and second chairs.

QEEJ TAAG MO
Tuag nyuq qeeg, tuag nyuq qeeg, ntuj ntuj rhi, ntuj ntsaab rhi.
Ib teb rhi ntuj ntsaab rhi, piv yuav huav, piv yuav huav.

Puj quas nam yuav lub pw, yawm quas txiv yuav lug dlub.
Puj quas nam yuav lug pw txug ntuj rhi, ntuj ntsaab rhi.
Yawm quas yuav lug pw ib teb rhi tej taag mo.

Puj quas nam tsaaq lis dleev qub qaj qab tsaj, txug dleev dleev tsi tsm swv.
Pum quas nam tsaaq lis dleev yuav nsa qua, sawv li tsoeg loob yuav qw.

Pum quas nam yuav moog has yawm quas txiv ib loob yuav quaj.
Pum quas nam yuav moog has yawm quas txiv ib loob yuav qw.
Yawm quas yuav lug has yog luas teb luas le quaj, yog luas chaw luas le qw.

Puj quas nam xav quas zom sab tsaj, plawv tsi kheev.
Puj quas nam, teq quas fum yuav coj xayab, tej quas nua yuav coj ntsav.
Yuav ntsooj neeb tuaj ntsav yai, ntsav li tsawv tuaj ntsaab tuaj.

Leej txiv neeb txiv quas yai, yuav ntsooj neeb tuaj ntsav yai mtschhi
Li twb li tawg puj quas nam xav quas ntsow tuaj keb pluj qa quas
Nrug lug yuav tawm tuaj. Tuaj kev tuaj qa quas nruq yuav tawm lug.
Pum quas xav quas ntsow, tuaj kev pluj yuav lug poob, tuaj kev tuag yuav lug ti su.
Pum quas nam nyav quas lawg kua muag poob, nyav quas lawg kua muag si, kua muag si.

GAENG: MIDNIGHT SONG
“Tuag Nyuq Qeeg, Tuag Nyuq Qeeg", late at midnight, “Piv Yuav Huav, Piv Yuav Huav”.
The wife goes to bed, the husband is coming to sleep.
The wife goes to bed at midnight, the husband is going to sleep.
At midnight, the wife awakens.
It is the chicken’s time, the chicken does not sing.
It is the dog’s time, the dog does not bark.
At midnight, the wife awakens.
The “Loob Nyua” bird cries. Awake, the “Loob Nyua” bird screams.
The wife goes to tell the husband that the bird cries and screams.
The husband says it is their country, they cry, it is their land, they scream.
The wife thinks, the heart does not want to die, the liver does not agree with death.
The wife takes her sacred incense and paper to the shaman.
The shaman performs his ceremony out into the land.
The shaman performs his ceremony and speaks.
The wife thinks that the loss of life is coming out, the way of death is getting nearer.
The wife thinks that the loss of life is arriving, the way of death is getting closer.
The wife is crying and tears are falling.
Crying out, the tears are falling like raindrops.
V. Song of the Refugee

The awful rip in the fabric of Hmong traditional life here from their fateful involvement in the Vietnam War has pushed one genre of *tu tza* into the front. The sadness of love lost that abounds in natural human relationships is now amplified to refer to a whole past, to family missing, to a place never to be returned to, to a whole way of being never to be known again. Boua Xou Mua refuses to forsake his people's cultural investment in that way of being and has spent his life here acting on that belief. We are proud of him and embrace his heart as he bids, with this closing song, his beautiful Laos a final farewell.

TSI TEB TSAWS CHAW

Awv... awv awv. Vim lub teb coj lub chaw tuaj lug tsi zoo.

Es kuv yuav tsiv teb tsaws chaw taqg qos ntox txug lawm tsaoj teb nua. Kuv yuav tsiv kuv leej nam leej txiv, leej kuv leej tig, tuaj tsua ib tsab teb es...

Kuv yuav ncu kuv leej kuv leej tig ua luaj nua, leej twg yuavpab los tsi paub?

Es ntshe kuv yuav tsiv es kuv yuav tsiv kuv leej nam leejtxiv, leej kuv leej tig tsua ib tsab teb. Leej twg yuavpab los tsi paub?

REFUGEE SONG

Because of the country becoming unpeaceful, I have to escape to another country.

To this country I leave my parents and cousins in another part of the world.

I miss them so much, is there anyone who will know or not?

Maybe I will die and leave my parents and cousins in another part of the world. Is there anyone who will know or not?
Suggested Reading

Published Works by Amy Catlin

1992

1988

1987

1987

1987

1986

1985

1982

1981

Video

1995
Amy Catlin, "Hmong Music in America," Apsara Media for Intercultural Education.

1994

For our 116-page illustrated catalog with full details about hundreds of CDs, Cassettes, LPs, Videos, and other information, send $2 to cover postage to:
ARHOLIE CATALOG - 10341 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530 USA
BOUA XOU MUA
The Music of the Hmong People of Laos

I. New Year's Songs
QEEJ KAWM NTAWV
GAENG SCHOOL SONG
LUG TXAJ SIB DLEEV
COURTSHIP SONG BY LEE MUA – LOVE SONG
LUG TXAJ UA NYAAB
COURTSHIP SONG BY BOUA XOU MUA – THE WAY OF BECOMING A WIFE

II. Courtship Instruments
TSAAJ NTSAWS - DJA NJER – LOVE SONG (Fipple Flute)
TSAAJ NPLAIM - DJA MBLAI (Free Reed Flute)
TSNUAB NPLOOJ - DZUA BLAUNG (Leaf)
NCAAS - NJA (Jew’s Harp)

III. Wedding Songs
ZAAJ TSHOOB – CEEB TOOM NAM TXIV
ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE PARENTS OF THE GROOM
ZAAJ TSHOOB – QEB TSOOG TUAM NTSAAA
ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE PARENTS OF THE BRIDE

IV. Funeral Music
QEEJ NQUG ROOJ - GAENG EVENING SONG: PULL THE TABLE
QEEJ TAAG MO - GAENG MIDNIGHT SONG

V. Song of the Refugee
TSAAJ NTSAWS – TSI TEB TSAWS CHAW
REFUGEE SONG

Documentary Arts was founded in 1985 as a non-profit corporation to broaden public knowledge and appreciation of the arts of different cultures in all media.

This compilation © 1995 Documentary Arts, Inc.
P.O. Box 140244
Dallas, Texas 75214

This recording was produced by Alan Govenar and edited by Nancy Lamb, and was funded in part by the Texas Commission on the Arts, the Folk and Traditional Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Regional Arts and Culture Council in Portland, Oregon.

Art Direction and Design by Ann Fell.