

CATHERINE FALK  
*University of Melbourne*

# Hmong Instructions to the Dead

## What the Mouth Organ *Qeej* Says (Part Two)

### Abstract

During the Hmong funeral ceremony, detailed instructions for the journey to the world of the ancestors are sung and played to the soul of the deceased. The free-reed mouth organ, or *qeej*, encrypts lengthy sung poems in its seven musical notes, creating a disguised language that can only be understood by the dead. This paper presents a first and complete version of the funeral poems of the *qeej*, performed by Mr. Xeem Thoj, a White Hmong ritual expert and *qeej* player from Laos who resettled in Australia in 1991. The text is presented in White Hmong with English translation. Annotations to the translation describe the *qeej*'s role in the funeral, compare accounts of the Hmong funeral from different times and places, and situate the language, imagery, and metaphor used in the text within the Hmong worldview.

**Keywords:** Hmong—Miao—funeral texts—ethnopoetry—instrumental speech surrogacy—*qeej*—*lusheng*—*khaen*

*Guide to the symbols used in the transliteration and translation*

1. { } indicates words or sections that Seng Thao later deemed to be incorrect.
2. Underlined words were added later by Seng Thao and are not heard on the recording.
3. Words in single quotation marks are untranslatable. They are used for euphony, and belong to the language of the *qeej*.
4. √ indicates an intake of breath.

The tempo of delivery of words, the melodic range, and the duration of each song are indicated at the beginning of each verse; the duration of the *qeej* rendition of the song is indicated at the end of each verse.

NKAUJ<sup>1</sup> QEEJ (Qeej Hauv Ncoo)<sup>2</sup>

Song of the *Qeej* (*Qeej* song for when the head is resting upon the pillow)

**1a. Why death occurs**

120 words per minute

Range: G1–G

Duration: 1'53"

Tog maum xees.<sup>3</sup> Tog maum xees. √

Tog maum xees qa tsi nws tsis yog<sup>4</sup> niag niaj hnuv,

pes nrab hnuv, √ nplooj tsis zeeg zoov tsis kaj, ntiaj pes teb nrag (?nrab)

qas cai txooj tib neeg los ntsib tuag ntim tsis tag.<sup>5</sup> √

*The day is not the right day or even the right half-day. It is dark—the jungle kingdom is dark and full of leaves.<sup>6</sup> The world is sad and a human being meets his destiny. The world overflows with living things. That is why someone must die.*

Tog maum xees nplooj tsis zeeg zoov tsis huv<sup>7</sup> ntiaj pes teb  
nrab qas cai txooj tib neeg √ los tsib tuag ntim tsis puv,  
ntiaj pes teb nrab qas cai txooj tib neeg los tuag tas. √

*The jungle kingdom is dark and unclean. The world is full of sadness, and death awaits. Someone must die.*

### **1b. A rooster will guide you to the world of your ancestors**

Yuav mus muab ‘tau’<sup>8</sup> puj lau-qaib tua siv ntis, yuav {los}<sup>9</sup> mus  
muab puj lau-qaib √ tua siv nrawv.

*Take the life of a rooster<sup>10</sup> so that it will be able to protect and guide the dead person to the next world.*

{Yuav mus muab} tus leej tub tuag yuav los noj tau {puj} lau-qaib √ siab,  
yuav haus tau lau-qaib ntsws.

*The dead person’s soul must eat the rooster’s liver<sup>11</sup> and the rooster’s lung.*

Yuav mus nrog tus lau-qaib √ nce sis hlov nce sis hlov √ Ntxwj qaum  
Nyoog, {yuav mus yuav mus nrog}. Txoj xub ke os<sup>12</sup> tshav ntuj pes  
tiaj nkaum lau-qaib dab, los nag pes tiag yuav nkaum lau-qaib tis.

*The dead person must then follow the rooster to the realm of Ntxwj Nyoog.<sup>13</sup> When it is sunny you [the dead person] can take shelter under the rooster’s breast and when it rains you can hide under the rooster’s wings.*

Yuav mus nrog tus lau-qaib √ nce sis hlov nce sis hlov Ntxwj qaum  
Nyoog txoj xub kev lawd tshav-tshav kub, lawd tshav-tshav<sup>14</sup> kub. √

*You will follow the rooster to the realm of Ntxwj Nyoog, the many very, very sunny roads of his kingdom.*

[Qeej plays for 2'32"]

QEEJ TU SIAV<sup>15</sup>

## The Song of Expiring Life

## 1. Ascertaining that death has truly occurred. Are you truly dead?

148 words per minute

Range: G1–G

Duration: 1'12"

Tav nov<sup>16</sup> leej tub tuag<sup>17</sup> koj tuag daj los tuag tiag, koj tuag tseeb los tuag cuav leej tub tuag, √ {tuag daj los tuag tiag, tuag tseeb los tuag cuav} tuag tseeb li tiag, yuav tuag tu pa<sup>18</sup> sis nrov tuaj ntawm ncauj, √ tuag tu siav si yws tua ntawm lo {yua} ib su.

*Up to this point of time, oh dead one, are you dead or not? Are you really dead or are you pretending to be dead? Are you truly dead or not? Are you really dead or faking death? If you are truly dead then your breathing organs must all stop functioning.*

{Leej tub tuag, tav nov, koj ib yuav tuag daj los tuag tiag, √ tuag tseeb los tuag cuav, leej tub tuag, yuav tuag tseeb li tiag, yuav tig qau pes ntsoov yuav mus √ xwv tau lawm tw av mus luaj du}.

*Oh, dead one, up to this moment, are you dead or not? Are you really dead or faking death? If you are truly dead then you must find your own cleared piece of land and lie with your back against the earthen floor.*

{Yuav tuag tseeb li tiag yuav tig ntsej xib qas liag, √ tig muag xub qas ntuv rov los xib oov. Kuv yuav hais tau txiaj saub kev seev rau koj mloog ib suv, leej tub tuag, koj li tau kev mus √ cuag poj los tau kab los cuag yawg nov ib suv<sup>19</sup>}.

*If you are truly dead you must turn to face me. Now I can recite the song of death for you to listen to so that it will help you to find your way to your grandparents' world.<sup>20</sup>*

Yuav raug tau hab cab os hab sis vos raug tau caj zeb  
Caj lis tsuas cev yuav nqe los nyob. Raug tau hab cab hab os sis  
voo raug tau caj zeb caj lis tsuas cev yuav nqe los txoo.<sup>21</sup>

*As you go on your journey you will encounter dangers such as threatening rocks and menacing roots and vines which will try to block your way.*

[Qeej plays for 2'19"]

**2. How illness and death came to earth<sup>22</sup>**

176 words per minute

Range: Bb1–F

Duration: 28"

Tav nov leej tub tuag koj yuav tuag daj los tuag tiag tuag  
 tseeb los tuag cuav leej tub tuag √ tuag tseeb lis tiag tuag.  
 Tus pas sis nrho tuaj ntawm ncauj tuag tus siav si yuv tuaj ntawv lob os leej  
 tub tuag,  
 tav nov, peb yuav mus √ tshuab qa tsis qeej os peb yuav mus tshuab  
 tem leev  
 tem leev hub tuag qeej cev  
 {no} su.

*If you are truly dead you must turn to face me, the qeej. Now I can recite the song of death for you to listen to so that it will help you to find your way to your grandparents' world.*

[Qeej plays for 1'10"]

184 words per minute

Range: Bb1–F

Duration: 1'22"

Tav nov leej tub tuag koj yuav tuag daj los tuag tiag tuag tseeb los tuag cuav  
 leej tub tuag,  
 yuav tuag tseeb lis tiag, √ tuag tu pa sis nro tuaj ntawm ncauj, tuag tu siav  
 si yws tuaj ntawm lo, leej tub tuag.

*Up to now, oh dead one, are you dead or not? Are you really dead or are you faking death? If you are truly dead then your breathing organs must all stop functioning.*

Yog tau ib xyoo no Ntxwj sib pes Nyoog √ siab tsis zoo, Ntxwj sib pes  
 Nyoog  
 yuav tso tau lub mob coj lub tuag yuav poob li nthav rau ntiaj teb, leej tub  
 tuag. √  
 Koj li yuav txhooj tsis paub leej tub tuag, txhooj tsis paub, leej tub tuag  
 yuav  
 khaws tau noj coj tau yoog leej tub tuag.

*This whole year, Ntxwj Nyoog has had evil in his heart. He has dropped illness and death to earth. Oh dead one, you did not know the illness, you really did not recognize it, and you absorbed the illness by mistake.*

Yog tau Ntxwj sib pes Nyoog siab tsis zoo, √ Ntxwj sib pes Nyoog yuav tso tau lub mob coj lub tuag poob li nthav rau ntiaj nrag, leej tub tuag txhooj tsis paub, leej tub tuag li khaws tau noj coj tau puag, leej tub tuag cuaj hnuab ua mob xi nxtiaj tuaj nruab siab, yim hmo ua noob li ntxawv tuaj nruab  
plawv, √ leej tub tuag koj li yuav {tau} tuag tu pa si nrov tuaj ntawm ncauj tuag tu siav sis yws tuaj ntawm lov no sus, leej tub tuag ib su los mus.

*Ntxwj Nyoog has turned bad and he has evil in his heart. He has dropped illness and death onto the earth. Oh dead one, you did not know this and you picked it up to take home. That is why in nine days you fell ill in your heart, in eight days<sup>23</sup> you fell ill in your heart and your breathing organs all stopped functioning and you died.<sup>24</sup>*

[Qeej plays for 3'09"]

### 3. Why you must now take your turn to die

176 words per minute

Range: Bb1–F

Duration: 2'27"

Tav nov leej tub tuag koj yuav tuag daj los tuag tiag tuag tseeb los tuag cuav leej tub tuag, yuav tuag tseeb lis tiag, √ tuag tu pa sis nthov tuaj ntawm ncauj, tuag tu siav si yws tuaj ntawm lo, leej tub tuag.

*Up to now, oh dead one, are you dead or not? Are you truly dead or are you pretending? If you are truly dead then your breathing organs must all stop functioning.*

Txhia niaj coj txhia xyoo yuav zoo niaj coj zoo xyoo, leej tub Tuag, √ nyuj dag nyuj li twm yuav tuag mus txhawm leej tub tuag lub qhov tuag, leej tub tuag txhooj tsis tau tuag mus txhawm leej tub tuag lub qhov tuag.<sup>25</sup> √

*Every other year is a good fine year, oh dead one, when bulls and buffaloes have died to fill and take your place in the chasm of death. That is why you did not die and did not yet take up your own place in the chasm of death.*

Txhia niaj coj txhia xyoo yuav zoo niaj coj zoo xyoo, leej tub tuag, nyuj dag nyuj li twm yuav tuag mus txhawm leej tub tuag lub qhov pluj, √ leej tub tuag txhooj tsis tau tuag mus txhawm leej tub tuag lub qhov pluj.

*Every other year is a good fine year, oh dead one, bulls and buffaloes have died to fill and take your place in the abyss of death. That is why you did not yet die and take up your own place in the abyss of death.*

Ib xyoo no {yog} yuav phem niaj coj phem xyoo, √ nyuj dag nyuj li  
twm yuav {tsis} tuag mus txhaws leej tub tuag lub qhov tuag, leej  
tub tuag yuav tuag mus txhaws leej tub tuag lub qhov tuag. √

*This year it has been a bad year for you. Bulls and buffaloes have not died to take your place in the chasm of death. Therefore, you must die in order to fill and take your place in the chasm of death.*

Ib xyoo no {zoo yog tau} yuav phem niaj coj tsiv xyoo, √ nyuj dag nyuj  
li twm yuav tsis tau tuag mus txhaws leej tub tuag lub qhov  
pluj, √ leej tub tuag koj li yuav tuag mus txhaws leej tub tuag  
lub qhov pluj.

*This year has been a bad year for you. Bulls and buffaloes have not died to replace you in the abyss of death. Therefore, you must die to fill the abyss of death and take your place there.*

Leej tub tuag, yuav tu leej tub tij siab li nthov, √ tu leej tub kwv  
siab li nrawv, leej tub tij yuav mus hu neeb hu neeb qas law  
hauv paus<sup>26</sup> zeb, yuav mus hu neeb {los neeb} tsis qas law neeb tsis  
teb, {yuav mus tu tub tij siab li nthov, √ tus tij yuav mus hu neeb  
qas law hauv hauv paus zeb, hu neeb los neeg tsis teb}, yuav  
tu leej tub tuag leej tub tij siab li nthov, leej tub tij yuav mus  
hu tshuaj qas law hauv paus ntoo, √ hu tshuaj los tshuaj tsis  
nroo, leej tub tuag yuav tuag tu pa si nthov √ tuaj ntawm ncauj, tuag tu  
siav sis yws tuaj ntawm lo ib suv, leej tub tuag koj li yuav los mus noj su.

*Oh dead one, your respected relatives and kinsfolk have called the spirits of the earth but they have not answered. Neither the shaman nor herbal medications have alleviated your illness. Your breath has ceased completely and no longer comes from your mouth. You must depart.*

[Qeej plays for 3'35"]

#### 4. You must put on your funeral clothing of hempen thread

192 words per minute

Range: Bb1–F

Duration: 1'14"

Tav nov leej tub tuag koj yuav tuag sawv kev li tsees yuav los mus leej tub tuag, yuav los mus √ zaum li ntuav leej tub tuag, yuav los zaum li ntuav tuaj nrab plaj, leej tub tuag yuav los zaum li ntuav ib plaub hau txhov li qas nyhov txhooj tsis tau qaws, leej tub tuag. √

*Now, oh dead one, you are really dead and you will begin your journey. As your hair is unruly you must sit up and your relatives will groom it for you.<sup>27</sup>*

Koj 'yuav koj' kwv los koj tij<sup>28</sup> yuav teg pes lauj yuav mus thov ib leej qas tsi yuav mus tshawb tau tsoos maj,<sup>29</sup> koj kwv koj tij yuav mus thov tau √ txawj txeeg txiv sis nquag yuav mus tsha wb tsoos maj, Koj kwv koj tij yuav mus thov ib leej qas tsi yuav mus tshawb tsoos ntuag. √

Yuav mus thov tau txawj txeeg txiv sis nquag yuav mus tshawb tau tsoos ntuag.

*Your brothers and relatives will respectfully request that someone selects and fetches some hemp shoes<sup>30</sup> and clothes<sup>31</sup> for you to wear to protect yourself from the cold and dust, oh dead one, so that you can be on your way to your grandparents' world.*

Yuav mus tshawb tsoos maj los √ tau txhij, tshawb tsoos ntuag los tau txhua, leej tub tuag.

*Now your clothing of hemp is complete, oh dead one.*

Yuav nqa los rau leej tub tuag yuav hnav mus tiv luaj coj tiv av, leej tub tuag √ li tau kev mus cuag poj, li tau kab mus cuag yawg nov suv.

*You must put on your clothing to wear for your departure from this world, oh dead one, and for your journey to meet your grandparents.*

[Qeej plays for 1'57"]



**5. Your relatives will request divination rods and will wash your face<sup>32</sup>**

176 words per minute

Range: Bb1–F

Duration: 1'23"

Tav nov leej tub tuag koj yuav tuag tseeb li tiag, tuag tu pa  
sis nro tuaj ntawm ncauj, tuag tu siav sis yws tuaj ntawm lo,  
leej tub tuag. √

*Now, oh dead one, you are truly dead, the breath is cut off from your mouth and your breathing organs have stopped functioning.*

Tav nov koj kwv koj tij yuav teg pes lauj yuav mus thov ib leej  
qas tsi yuav mus caum cwj mus txhib ntawg.<sup>33</sup>

*Now your brothers and relatives will ask someone to look for a sharp pointed wooden stick.*

Koj kwv koj tij yuav teg pes lauj √ mus thov tau txawj txeeg txiv  
sis nquag, yuav mus caum tau tus cwj mus txhib ntawg.

*Your brothers and relatives have brought a ritual expert who will find a sharp pointed wooden stick.*

Koj kwv koj tij yuav thov ib leej qas tsi yuav √ mus caum cwj mus  
qhuab kab.

*Your brothers and relatives have brought a ritual expert who will find divining sticks<sup>34</sup> to show you the way.*

Yuav mus thov tau txawj txeeg txiv sis nquag yuav mus caum  
tau tus cwj mus qhuab kab leej tub tuag. √

*A ritual expert<sup>35</sup> will show you the way with divination sticks, oh dead one.*

Tav nov koj kwv koj tij yuav teg pes lauj yuav mus ce dej pem  
xub zeb.<sup>36</sup>

*Now your brothers and relatives will fetch some water from behind a rock.*

Yuav mus ce los ntxuav tau leej tub tuag lub ntsej coj lub muag  
tshiab li khi rais li lees rov mus lawm tub tuag tej. √

*They will wash your face and eyes and clean you so that you can return to the world of spirits.*

Tav nov leej tub tuag koj kwv koj tij yuav teg pes lauj yuav mus  
ce dej pem xub tsuag.

*Now your brothers and relatives will fetch some water from the woods.*

Yuav mus ce los ua leej tub tuag √ dej mus ntxuav muag, ntxuav  
leej tub tuag lub ntsej coj lub muag tshiab li khi lawm tub tuag  
nroog, no su.

*Your brothers and relatives will bring water to wash your face and eyes and clean you so that you can return to the world of the spirits with a fresh face.*

[*Qeej* plays for 2'36"]

## 6. Divining sticks will show you the way to the world of your ancestors

184 words per minute

Range: G#1–F#

Duration: 1'30"

Tav nov leej tub tuag koj yuav tuag tseeb li tiag, yuav tuag tu  
pa sis nro tuaj ntawm ncauj tuag tu siav sis yws tuaj ntawm lo,  
leej tub tuag. √

*By now, oh dead one, you are truly dead, the breath is cut off from your mouth and your breathing organs have stopped functioning.*

Tav nov koj kwv koj tij yuav teg pes lauj yuav mus thov ib leej  
qas tsi yuav mus caum hniav riam.<sup>37</sup>

*Now your brothers and relatives will respectfully invite someone to look for a knife.*

Koj kwv koj tij yuav teg pes lauj mus thov tau √ txawj txeeg txiv  
sis nquag yuav teg pes lauj mus caum hniav riam.

*Your brothers and relatives have invited a ritual expert who will find a knife.*

Koj kwv lawm koj tij √ yuav mus thov ib leej qas tsi yuav mus caum  
hniav txuas.

*Your brothers and relatives will ask someone to look for a bush knife.*

‘Yuav mus thov tau’ koj kwv koj tij yuav mus thov tau txawj txeeg txiv sis  
nquag √ yuav mus caum hniav txuas.

*Your brothers and relatives have invited a ritual expert who will find a bush knife.*

Yuav mus txiav nraw tsis txiav nru, txiav nraw nru tuaj pem ntuj  
poob li nthav tuaj pem teb yuav phua li plhawv tuaj nruab nrab. √

*They will chop a bamboo tree at two points, at the top and the bottom, and the bamboo trunk will split in the middle and fall down on the ground.*

Yuav nqa los ua tau leej tub tuag tus cwj mus qhuab kab.

*They will bring a pair of divining sticks for showing you the way.*

Yuav mus txiav nraw tsis txiav nru, txiav nraw nru tuaj pem ntuj poob li nthav √ tuaj nram tog, yuav phua li plhawv tuaj nruab cev.

*They will chop a bamboo tree at two points, at the top and the bottom, and the bamboo trunk will split in the middle and fall down on the ground.*

Yuav nqa los ua leej tub tuag tus cwj mus qhuab kev.

*They will bring a pair of divining sticks for showing you the way.*

Yuav qhuab sis nraim leej tub tuag √ lawm dab teb mus 'lawm' dab nroog,<sup>38</sup> no su los mus.

*A pair of divining sticks will show you the way to the world of spirits.*

[Qeej plays for 2'14"]

### 7. You must ask permission to leave from the house spirits<sup>39</sup>

184 words per minute

Range: C–G

Duration: 1'34"

Tav nov leej tub tuag koj yuav tuag sawvkev lis tseem yuav los mus txog ob niam txiv<sup>40</sup> dab qhov rooj<sup>41</sup> li paim, √ yuav los mus ua ob niam txiv dab qhov rooj li paim ib lolus tsaug, koj li mus leej tub tuag.

*Now, oh dead one, now you are commencing your journey. You will go out through the front door. You must pay your respects to the pair of bedroom door spirits and ask their permission before you leave.*

Tav nov ob niam txiv dab qhov rooj li paim √ teg pes lauj tuav tau nplawm tooj lauj pes nag tuav nplawm taw, yuav ua daj li thi los mus thaiv koj kab, √ ua dos li ruav los mus thaiv koj kev, yuav hais tias tav nov koj yuav los mus ua niaj 'tub' dab tsi, leej tub tuag? √

*Now the door spirits, holding bronze sticks in their hands, will block the doorway preventing you from going out. They will ask you, "Why are you leaving, oh dead one?"*

Koj yuav hais tias “lub mob los nej tsis pab ntis, lub tuag los nej tsis pab thaiv, lub mob poob li nthav rau ntiaj teb, √ lub tuag poob li nthav {los} rau ntiaj nrag, tej hlob khaws tau noj, tej hlob mus nrog ploj, tej yaus khaws tau puag, tej yaus mus nrog tuag.” √

*You must reply, “Dear bedroom door spirits, you have not protected me from illness and death. Illness and death have fallen on earth. When the old pick them up, the old will die. And when the young pick them up, the young will die. Now, I am not a human being, I am a spirit, so I must leave the house and be on my way.”*

Tav nov leej tub tuag yuav ciaj neeg los ciaj tsis tau, yuav ciaj dab ces yuav los mus. Ob niam txiv dab qhov rooj li paim √ los yog niam txiv ncej dab ncej li qhua,<sup>42</sup> dab vaj dab li tsev,<sup>43</sup> li tso koj ncauj li pluav, koj kab li to li thuav, tso lus li plo koj kev li to lis tog, √ koj li tau kev mus cuag pog<sup>44</sup> ‘koj li’ tau kab los mus cuag yawg, no su.

*You, the door spirits, are the guardians and protectors of the house. With your permission, I can leave the house and be on my way to my grandparents’ world.*

[Qeej plays for 2'27"]

## 8. You will start your journey to the world of Ntxwj Nyoog

192 words per minute

Range: Bb1–F

Duration: 47"

Tav nov leej tub tuag koj yuav tuag sawvkev li tseem, yuav los mus nce lis hlwv lis hlo Ntxwj sib pes Nyoog luj toj peg tshav mus ntuj kub. √

*Now, oh dead one, you are about to start on the journey to the other world, to the sunny kingdom of Ntxwj Nyoog.*

Leej tub tuag koj yuav los pom tau neej pes dab los mus sis phoo txuam dab pes txaig los sib phoo tshauv.

*Oh dead one, you will see spirits and human beings intermingling and throwing ash to each other.*

Leej tub tuag, √ koj yuav mus {pom tau tus dej dag quas li yuav los mus} muab tau rab khaub xib muj li toog, yuav los mus √ rau li ntuav tuaj tim ntuj neej rov lawm neej teb dab rov lawm dab

tsug, {yuav} dej dag quas li ntua √ koj li tau kev mus cuag pog li tau kab mus cuag yawg, no su.

*Oh dead one, you will then see the big river<sup>45</sup> and a stick which you must place on the shore of the river. This will separate the human and spirit worlds.*

[Qeej plays for 1'57"]

### 9. You will pass through the checkpoint to Ntxwj Nyoog's realm

184 words per minute

Range: B1–F#

Duration: 48"

Tav nov leej tub tuag koj yuav {tuag} sawkev li tseem, yuav los mus nce lis hlwv lis hlo Ntxwj sib pes Nyoog toj zeb zag pes zeb tsov.

*Now, oh dead one, now you are arriving at the place of the stone dragon and the stone tiger at the mountain kingdom of Ntxwj Nyoog.*

Leej tub tuag √ yuav los mus pom tau zaj<sup>46</sup> rua ncauj li tsua, qab kev<sup>47</sup> los tsov rua lo li tsua, qaum kev<sup>48</sup> los leej tub tuag luag muab luag cwj mag cwj ntuag ntsaws, √ koj muab cwj mag cwj ntuag ntsaws, luag muab luag cov ntaub cov ntawv<sup>49</sup> ntsaws, koj muab koj cov ntaub cov ntawv ntsaws, luag √ muab luag cwj mag cwj ntuag ntsaws, luag muab luag cov ntaub cov ntawv ntsaws, koj muab koj cov ntaub cov ntawv ntsaws, √ luag mus dhau, koj li mus dhau, no su.

*Oh dead one, in front of you, you will see a dragon opening its jaws, waiting for you. On the downhill side of the road, you will see a tiger opening its jaws waiting for you.<sup>50</sup> On the uphill side of the road, you will see offices.<sup>51</sup> You will see spirits showing the officials their travel documents, paying their taxes and having their belongings inspected. You too will show your travel documents, pay your tax and have your belongings inspected. The spirits will pass through the checkpoint and you too will pass through the checkpoint.*

[Qeej plays for 1'40"]

### 10. You must put on your shoes of hemp

200 words per minute

Range: Bb1–F

Duration: 36"

Tav nov leej tub tuag koj yuav tuag sawv kev lis tsees, yuav los mus nce lis hlwv lis hlo Ntxwj sib pes Nyoog toj kab ntsuab dawm kab ntsig.<sup>52</sup> √

*Now, oh dead one, you are truly on your way to the kingdom of Ntxwj Nyoog, ascending a mountainous blue path full of insects and caterpillars.*

Yuav los pom tau kab ntsuab ntsu li rhaw los tav zaj,<sup>53</sup> kab ntsig ntsu li rhawv los thav tog, leej tub tuag.

*You will see insects and caterpillars piled up all over the slippery rocks, oh dead one.*

Luag muab luag khau maj rau, √ koj muaj koj khau maj rau, luag muab luag khau ntuag rau os, koj muab koj khau ntuag rau, luag √ mus dhau koj li mus dhau, nov su, leej tub tuag ib su los mus.

*Other souls don their hempen shoes, so you also put on your hempen shoes. They don their shoes of cloth, so you also put on your shoes of cloth. They walk over the field and go through, so you too walk over the field and go through.*

[Qeej plays for 1'25"]

### 11. You must choose the Hmong road to the world of the ancestors

192 words per minute

Range: C–G

Duration: 58"

Tav nov leej tub tuag koj yuav ntim tau txiaj saub zam li yeev, tuag sawvkev lis tsees yuav los mus nce lis hlwv lis hlo Ntxwj sib pes Nyoog √ cuaj ntxwg kev khaub lig, yim Ntxwj kev mus khaub luag, leej tub tuag.

*Oh dead one, you have put on your best clothes and now you are arriving at the busiest intersection of nine or eight<sup>54</sup> roads in Ntxwj Nyoog's kingdom.*

Koj yuav los pom tau txoj kev tuaj pem toj, hneev nyuj hneev nees ntsu li ntsuav, yog niaj Mab niaj Suav<sup>55</sup> √ txoj kev mus ua lag coj ua luam.

*You will see that the upper road on your right hand side is full of the hoofprints of horses and cattle. Other people and Chinese people<sup>56</sup> use this road for trading and doing their business.*

Txoj kev puas nram hav, yuav yog hneev nyuj hneev nees lwj sis  
lis ntxaws, √ yog niaj Mab niaj Suav txoj kev mus ua luam ntaub  
coj luam xov yuas.

*The road down there on the left hand side is also full of the tracks of horses and cattle. Other people and Chinese traders of fabric and thread also use this road.*

Leej tub tuag, txoj kev nruab nrab, dej txiaj lis yuav teev sis  
Niab, √ lis yog koj kev mus cuag poj, lis yog koj kab mus cuag  
yawm, koj lis tau kev mus cuag poj,<sup>57</sup> lis tau kab mus cuag yawm no su.

*Oh dead one, the road in the middle with clear still water which has no animal footprints is the road for you to take to your grandparents' world.*

[Qeej plays for 1'23"]

## 12. Ntxwj Nyoog's guardians will greet you<sup>58</sup>

192 words per minute

Range: G#1–F#

Duration: 1'45"

Tav nov leej tub tuag, koj yuav tuag sawvkev, ntim tau txiaj  
saub zam lis yeev, yuav nce lis hlo Ntxwj sib pes Nyoog txiv  
dab rooj lis ntug √ (ntuj), nce lis hlwv nce lis hlo Ntxwj sib  
pes Nyoog lub dawm mus rooj ntug.

*Oh dead one, you have dressed well and now you are reaching the mountain pass to Ntxwj Nyoog's frontier and the gate between sky and earth.*

Leej tub tuag, yuav yog tau Ntxwj sib pes Nyoog txiv dab rooj  
lis ntug yuav laug tau tus ntaiv ntuj lis nthw lis ntho tuaj  
nram tiaj, √ laug tus ntaiv teb lis nrhwv lis nrho tuaj nram  
tus.

*Oh dead one, the guards of Ntxwj Nyoog's world will lower the ladder and show you the steps to your grandparents' world.<sup>59</sup>*

Leej tub tuag, koj yuav los mus nce sis hlwv nce sis hlo txiv  
dab rooj pes ntug tus ntaiv ntuj, nce sis hlwv sis hlo txiv dab  
rooj pes ntug tus ntaiv teb.

*Oh dead one, the guards of Ntxwj Nyoog's realm will lower the ladder and show you the gateway to the sky.*

Leej tub tuag, √ txiv dab rooj lis ntug yuav hais tias, “Tav nov leej tub tuag koj yuav los mus ua niaj dab tsi?”

*Oh dead one, the guardian spirits of the sky will ask you, “Why are you leaving your world, oh dead one?”*

Koj li yuav hais tias, “Tav nov lub mob los koj tsis ntis, lub tuag los koj tsis thaiv, lub mob {yuav} poob li nthav √ {los} rau ntiaj. Teb, lub tuag {yuav} poob li nthav rau ntiaj nroog, tej hlob khaws tau noj teb hlob mus nrog ploj, tej yau khaws tau tuag tej yaus mus nrog tuag. √ Tav nov yuav ciah neeg los ciah tsis tau, ciah dab ces yuav los mus.”

*You must reply, “Dear guardians, you have not protected me from illness and death. Illness and death descended to earth, where the old people pick them up and will die, and the young people pick them up and will also die. Now, I am no longer a human being, I am a spirit, so I must leave this world and be on my way.”*

“Ob niam txiv dab rooj pes ntug, yuav li muab tus yawm sij pes toog √ los mus qheb li ntaws Ntxwj sib pes Nyoog lub dawm rooj ntug, plam si li plaws,<sup>60</sup> muab lub yawm sib toog rau li ntua √ ntawm rooj ntug yuav plam li pluav,<sup>61</sup> leej tub tuag, koj li yuav tau kev rag li nrhi mus cuag poj, rag li nrhuav mus cuag yawm no su.”

*“You, the husband and wife guardians of the frontier between heaven and earth, you have the bronze key to open the gate to heaven. With this key, you can open the heavenly gate so that I can find my own way to my grandparents' world.”*

[Qeej plays for 2'54"]

### 13. A rooster will crow

184 words per minute

Range: Bb1–F

Duration: 1'03"

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, koj ntim tau txiaj saub zam li yeev, yuav los mus txog Ntxwj sib pes Nyoog. √ Los mus txog rau koj pog koj yawg, leej tub tuag. Koj yuav los txog lis ntua os, koj qaib qua luag qaib teb tsis yog. √



*Now, oh dead one, you have donned your best clothes and you have arrived at the kingdom of Ntxwj Nyoog. You have arrived at your grandparents' world, and your chicken (rooster) will crow.*

Koj qaib qua luag qaib tsis teb, tsis yog koj pog koj yawg, luag yuav ntxias koj mus dhia kwj zeb {yuam}, leej tub tuag. Koj qaib qua luag qaib tsis nra √ luag yuav ntxias koj mus dhia kwj ha.<sup>62</sup>

*If another chicken replies to your chicken incorrectly, or does not reply at all, then this is not your grandparents' world, and someone means to harm you.*

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, koj ntim tau txiaj saub zam lis yeev, los mus txog koj pog koj yawg, √ koj yuav los mus.

*Now, oh dead one, you have donned your best clothes and you have arrived at your grandparents' world.*

Koj qaib qua luag qaib teb, lis yog koj pog koj yawg, koj yuav los mus tsaws sib nroos rau koj pog koj yawg tej npoo hleb.<sup>63</sup>

*Your chicken will crow, and if another chicken crows correctly in reply, then it is your grandparents' world. Then you can land on the edge of your grandparents' coffin.*

Tav nov, koj qaib qua, luag qaib ntsa li yog koj pog koj yawg, koj yuav los mus tsaws sib lis nroo √ rau koj pog koj yawg tej npoo ntxa, no su.

*Now, if your chicken crows and another chicken answers back correctly, then it is your grandparents' world. You can then land on the side of your grandparents' grave.*

[Qeej plays for 2'01"]

#### **14. A chicken will guide you to your ancestors' world<sup>64</sup>**

192 words per minute

Range: B1–F#

Duration: 31"

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, koj yuav tuag sawvkev lis tsees los mus txog koj pog koj yawg, leej tub tuag, koj yuav los mus.

*Now, oh dead one, you are truly dead and you have arrived at your grandparents' world.*

Tav nov, koj pog koj yawg, √ koj yuav los mus, koj qaib khiav lis khuav tuaj nruab kab os, koj yuav los tsaws lis nroos rau koj pog koj yawg qab mus plaj xab.<sup>65</sup>

*Your chicken will cheerfully run in the middle of the road, leading you so that you can land at your grandparents' granary.*

Koj qaib khiav lis khuav tuaj nruab kev, √  
 koj yuav los mus tsaws sis lis nroos rau koj pog koj yawg qab plaj tsev, os.

*Your chicken will run in the middle of the road, leading you so that you can land on your grandparents' house.*

### 15. The *Qeej* and the Drum will leave you now

184 words per minute

Range: B1–F#

Duration: 51"

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, tav nov koj tau khau maj khau ntuag rau, √  
 koj mus tau, nkauj qeeg txiv nraug nruas,<sup>66</sup> wb yuav tsis tau  
 khau maj khau ntuag rau os, wb yuav mus tsis tau, √ leej tub tuag.

*Now, oh dead one, you have put on your hempen shoes and you can go. The Lady Qeej and Sir Nruas (drum), we have no hempen shoes, and so we cannot accompany you, oh dead one.*

Tav nov, koj yuav los tau zoo poj coj zoo yawm, koj yuav los  
 tau zoo niam coj zoo txiv os yuav, √ koj tau khau koj mus tau, cia koj  
 mus, nkauj qeeg txiv nraug nruas wb yuav tsis tau zoo khau maj  
 coj khau ntuag rau, wb yuav mus tsis tau.

*Now, you have found your good grandparents, your good mother and good father, and you have put on your shoes, so you can go. We, the Lady Qeej and Sir Nruas, we have no hempen shoes, and we cannot go with you.*

Wb yuav ua tau niaj kab coj me noog, √ yuav nrhees nplooj coj  
 nrhees lwg, yuav nrhees kab coj nrhees khuav, nrhees lis  
 khuav raug tau {kooj nraug kooj} nkauj qeeg txiv nraug nruas, √  
 wb tus roj tus hneev nqes lawm ntiaj nrag, no su.

*We will change ourselves into insects or birds and search for our tracks. We will search on the leaves of the trees and on the ground for our path back to earth, back to the world of the living, the human world.*

[*Qeej* plays Verses 14 and 15 for 2'11"]

QEEJ TSA NEES<sup>67</sup>*Qeej song for when the corpse is placed on its bier*

1.

192 words per minute

Range: A1–E

Duration: 48"

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, ib leej qas twg yuav ua zam zoo, leej tub tuag. √ Yuav yog tau leej tub tuag li ua zam zoo. Ib leej qas tsi yuav ua zam suav, yog tau leej tub tuag, koj li yuav ua zam suav, leej tub tuag. √

*Now, someone has put on their best clothes, oh dead one. It is you, oh dead one, who has put on your best clothes. Someone has put on the best Chinese clothes. It is you, oh dead one, who has put on your best Chinese clothes.*

Tav nov, koj kwv koj tij yuav teg pes lauj yuav mus thov tau os √ txawj txeeg txiv sis nquag, yuav mus muas tau ib neej pes dab yuav cab los poob plaj, yuav mus muas tau ib neej pes txaig √ yuav cab los poob tsev os, leej tub tuag. Tav nov, koj li yuav sawv sis tsees yuav los mus nce sis hlwv sis hlo ib nees zab duav nees luav cev, ib su.

*Now your brothers and relatives have asked a nobleman to buy an animal and lead it back home, oh dead one. Now, you will mount the back of this artificial horse, your bier.*

[Qeej plays for 1'38"]

2.

200 words per minute

Range: Ab1–F

Duration: 47"

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, yuav koj ib yuav ib leej qas tsi yuav ua zam zoo, leej tub tuag yuav ua zam zoo, leej qas tsi ua zam suav, leej tub tuag yuav ua zam suav, leej tub tuag. √ Koj kwv koj tij yuav teg pes lauj yuav mus thov tau txawj txeeg txiv sis nquag, yuav mus muas tau ib neej pes dab cab sis zu yuav los poob plaj. √

*Now, oh dead one, someone has put on their best clothes. It is you, oh dead one, you have put on your best clothes. Someone has put on their best Chinese clothes. It is you, oh dead one, who has put on your best Chinese clothes.*

Koj kwv koj tij yuav lauj xib pes nag yuav mus muas tau ib neej  
 pes txaig, yuav mus cab los sis zu los poob tsev. Leej tub tuag,  
 koj yuav sawv lis tsees, √ yuav los nce sis hlo sis hlo nees  
 zab duav nees luav cev su, pem leev su los mus.

*Your brothers and relatives have found a nobleman who will buy an animal and will carefully lead it back home. Oh dead one, you will stand up and mount the horse's back and body.*

[*Qeej* plays for 59"]

### 3. Version One.

200 words per minute

Range: A1–F

Duration: 58"

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, koj yuav sawv lis tseem yuav los mus  
 nrog tau ib nees zab sis puag ntug, yuav los nrog tau √ ib nees  
 luav los sib puag pw os, leej tub tuag. Tav nov, koj yuav los  
 mus pw seev pes yees yuav los nrog ib nees zab sib puag ntu tuaj  
 tom thaj, ib nees luav sis puag pw tuaj tom txuas. Koj yuav los  
 hau tau cuaj txog dej sis zu tuaj tom taj mus tso tseg, √ hau yim  
 txoj cawv sis zu tuaj txuas mus tso cia.

Leej tub tuag, koj yuav ib leej qas tsi, yuav √ yuav yog tau leej tub tuag,  
 koj yuav nrog tau ib nees zab coj nees luav nyob niaj txhiab mus  
 mes txis, ib niaj coj ib xyoo, ib niaj coj ib hnuv os. Koj √ yuav  
 nrog tau nees zab coj nees luav ntu mus thawm niaj coj thawm  
 xyoo, no su.}

[*Qeej* plays for 1'22"]

### 3. Version Two.

112 words per minute

Range: C–G

Duration: 30"

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, koj yuav los mus nrog tau √ ib nees zab  
 duav nees luav cev sis puag ntu, yuav los pw. Koj yuav los √ pauj  
 dab sis zu tuaj tom taj, los pauj qhua<sup>68</sup> sis zu tuaj tom txuas.

*Now, oh dead one, you have ascended the artificial horse's back and body and are mounted there. You will have to pay your respects to the spirits of the house and the guests who have come to this occasion.*

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, koj yuav los mus hau tau cuaj txog dej  
sis zu tuaj tom taj, √ hau tau yim txoj cawv sis zu tuaj tom  
txuas. Yuav los hau cuaj txoj dej mus tso tseg, hau tau yim  
txoj cawv tuaj tom txuas mus tso cia, ib su.

*Now, oh dead one, to pay respect you will have to drink nine cups of water and eight cups of wine. To pay respect, oh dead one, you will have to drink nine cups of water and eight cups of wine.*

[*Qeej* plays for 56"]

## QEEJ COB TSIAJ

### *Qeej* song for animal sacrifices

1.

200 words per minute

Range: A1–E

Duration: 1'00"

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, tav nov leej tub tuag, yuav yog tau  
koj kwv koj tij yuav hlub tis ua hlub,  
yog koj niam koj txiv yuav tshua tis ua tshua os,  
koj kwv koj tij, koj niam koj txiv, yuav teg pes lauj yuav mus  
muab tau √ tus tsiaj lag tsiaj sis zi, tsiaj mus plaub ci, txhuv  
lag txhuv sis zi, txhuv mus plaub dub os, leej tub tuag.

*Now, oh dead one, because of the love and the grief your brothers, relatives and parents have for you, they will give you a pig [livestock] and some rice for you to take with you.*

Tav nov, koj kwv koj tij yuav teg pes √ lauj tuav txhib ntawg,  
lauj xib pes nag tuav qho cawb, yuav ntawg sis twv sis tawb  
rau leej tub tuag tej qauv npab, nias sis nthi rau leej tub  
tuag tej qauv tes, leej tub tuag. √ {Koj kwv koj tij yuav teg.}

*Now, oh dead one, your brothers and relatives will ceremoniously grasp a piece of string and tie the string to the live pig and the rice and to your palms and soles.*

Tav nov, leej tub tuag koj li yuav teg pes lauj yuav los txais tau  
txoj mus hlua tsiaj, lauj xib pes nag yuav los txais tau txoj  
hlua txhuv, yuav los haus dej haus cawv<sup>69</sup> sis zu tuaj ntawm, no su.

*Now, oh dead one, you will hold the string and take the pig and the rice with you. By drinking this wine, you tell us that you accept these offerings and gifts.<sup>70</sup>*

[Qeej plays for 2'00"]

2.

160 words per minute

Range: Bb1–F

Duration: 58"

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, koj {yuav} koj kwv koj tij yuav teg pes lauj tuav  
txhib ntawg, lauj xib pes nag tuav khob cawv os, yuav  
ntawg √ sis twv sis tawb, txoj hlua tsiaj nruj sis nrees rau  
leej tub tuag tej quav npab, nias sis nthi txoj hlua txhuav nruj  
sis nrees rau leej tub tuag √ tes qauv tes, leej tub tuag.

*Now, oh dead one, your brothers and relatives will ceremonially lead the string, tying the livestock outside the house, the cooked rice and the wine to your hands.*

Tav nov {koj kwv koj tij yuav muab niaj ib tug, √ tav nov} leej  
tub tuag koj yuav coj tau ib tug mus, yuav tseg kom tau niaj txhiab niaj  
pua tus rau koj tub koj ki, koj kwv koj tij yuav  
yug ncauj, yug lo tuaj tom qab, leej tub tuag. √ Koj yuav coj ib  
tug mus, yuav coj mus tam tau Ntxwj sib pes Nyoog lub liaj ia  
teb chaws mus tau noj, yuav coj mus tam tau Ntxwj sib pes  
Nyoog liaj ia teb chaws kom tau nrog luag yoog, no su.

*Now, oh dead one, you have been given only one pig to take with you. You must leave thousands and hundreds behind for your children, your brothers and relatives, to use for food. Oh dead one, you have taken one pig to the land of Ntxwj Nyoog and it must multiply for you to use as food forever.*

[Qeej plays for 1'58"]

3.

184 words per minute

Range: Bb1–F

Duration: 1'06"

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, koj tub koj ki, koj kwv koj tij yuav  
 hlub tis ua hlub, tshua tis ua tshua os, yuav mob tis ua tshua,  
 leej tub tuag. √ Koj tub koj ki yuav hlub tis ua hlub yuav teg pes  
 lauj yuav mus muab tau tus tsiaj lag, tsiaj sis zis tsiaj mus  
 qab nkuag txhuv lag txhuv sis zis, txhuv mus qab thaiv, yuav  
 los ua tau, leej tub tuag, tu sis zus tuaj nram tsev os, leej  
 tub tuag.

*Now, oh dead one, because of the love and the grief your children, brothers and relatives have for you, they will find a bull from the stable and rice from the granary to bring home for you to take with you.*

Tav nov, koj kwv koj tij √ txiv mus coj dab, yuav teg pes lauj  
 yuav mus tuav txhib ntawg, lauj xib pes nag tuav khob cawv,  
 yuav ntawg sis twv sis tawb rau leej tub tuag √ tej qauv npab,  
 nias sis nthi rau leej tub tuag tej qauv tes.

*Your brothers and relatives will ceremonially give you the bull and the rice, by placing the string tied to the bull and rice in your hands.*

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, koj yuav teg pes lauj yuav los mus txais  
 tau txoj hlua tsiaj, lauj xib pes nag los yuav mus txais tau  
 txoj hlua txhuv, yuav los mus txais tsiaj txais txhuv sis zu  
 tuaj ntawm no, √ haus dej haus cawv sis zu mus tso cia, no su.

*Now, oh dead one, you will ceremonially accept the animal and the cooked rice and drink the wine. By taking hold of the string you show that you have accepted these offerings from your brothers and relatives.*

[*Qeej* plays for 2'03"]

4.

208 words per minute

Range: Bb1–F

Duration: 1'06"

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, koj tub koj ki, koj kwv koj tij yuav  
 hlub tis ua hlub, yuav mob tis ua tshuav, yuav teg pes lauj  
 yuav muab tau √ lub kaus dub rau leej tub tuag coj mus roos hnoob  
 os, {yuav}. Koj kwv koj tij yuav hlub tis ua hlub, tshua tis ua

tshua os, yuav mus muab tau √ lub kaus thi rau leej tub tuag, yuav  
 coj mus roos hli, yuav coj mus roos yaj ceeb<sup>71</sup> kev tsaus ntuj,  
 yeeb ceeb<sup>72</sup> kev tsis nuj, yuav coj mus roos tau yaj ceeb kev tsaus  
 hli, √ yeeb ceeb kev ntsim nqe os, leej tub tuag.

*Now, oh dead one, because of the love and the grief your children, your brothers  
 and relatives have for you, they will also give you a black umbrella to protect you  
 from the sun and the moon.*

Koj yuav coj tau niaj ib tug mus yuav tseg niaj txhiab niaj puas tus rau koj  
 tub koj ki, koj kwv koj tij yuav yug ncauj yug lo tuaj tom qab, no su. √

*You have taken one bull with you but you must leave behind thousands and hun-  
 dreds for your children, your brothers and relatives to use as meat.*

Leej tub tuag, tav nov, koj yuav coj tau ib tug mus, yuav  
 coj mus tam tau Ntxwj sib pes Nyoog lub liaj ia teb chaws kom  
 tau noj, yuav coj mus tam tau Ntxwj sib pes Nyoog liaj ia teb  
 chaws kom tau yoog, √ {nrog luag yoog,} no su, leej tub tuag, ib  
 su los mus.

*Oh dead one, you have taken one bull with you to the land of Ntxwj Nyoog  
 where you must raise it so that it multiplies for you to use as food forever.*

[*Qeej* plays for 2'31"]

#### QEEJ HLAUV NTAWV THIAB XYAB

##### *Qeej* song for burning paper money and incense

1. 208 words per minute

Range: A1–E

Duration: 1'02"

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, koj tub koj ki, koj kwv koj tij, yuav  
 hlub tis ua hlub, mob tis ua tshuav, leej tub tuag. √ Koj tub koj  
 ki yuav teg pes lauj yuav mus muab tau, √ {yuav mus muab tau} hauv  
 txiaj ntaub, lauj xib pes nag yuav mus muab tau hauv txiaj  
 ntawv, yuav los ua rau leej tub tuag, tu sis zus tuaj nram tsev  
 os, leej tub tuag. Koj kwv lawm koj tij √ teg pes lauj tuav txhib



ntawg, lauj xib pes nag tuav khob cawv, yuav ntawg sis twv sis tawb, hauv txiaj ntaub rau leej tub tuag tej qauv npab, √ nias sis nthi hauv txiaj ntawv rau leej tub tuag tej quav tes.

*Now, oh dead one, because of the love and grief your children, brothers and relatives have for you they will give you golden papers for you to take with you. Your brothers and relatives will give you the golden papers and wine.*

Leej tub tuag, koj li yuav teg pes lauj yuav los mus txais √ tau hauv txiaj ntaub sis zu tuaj ntawm tes, lauj xib pes nag yuav los txais hauv txiaj ntawv sis zu tuaj ntawm npab, ib su. Leej tub tuag, yuav los haus dej haus cawv sis zu tuaj ntawm no, ib su.

*Oh dead one, you will accept these golden papers by drinking the water and the wine offered you by your children, brothers and relatives.*

[Qeej plays for 2'28"]

2.

200 words per minute

Range: A1–E

Duration: 1'01"

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, koj kwv koj tij yuav teg pes lauj, √ yuav los mus tuav ntxib ntawg, lauj xib pes nag tuav khob cawv os, yuav ntawg sis twb sis tawb hauv txiaj ntawv nros pes nrees leej tub tuag tej quav npab, √ nias sis nthi hauv txiaj ntawv nros sis nrees rau leej tub tuag tej quav tes, leej tub tuag. Tav nov, koj kwv koj tij, √ leej tub tuag yuav teg pes lauj yuav los mus txais tau hauv txiaj ntaub os, lauj xib pes nag yuav los txais hauv txiaj ntawv su, leej tub tuag.

*Now, oh dead one, your brothers and relatives will give you the golden papers and the wine. They will place the golden papers in your hands. Your brothers and relatives will thank the people who brought you the golden papers.*

Tav nov, koj yuav coj txiaj txheej qas zus mus, √ koj yuav tseg yeeb txheej qas zus rau koj tub koj ki yuav yug ncauj yug lo tuam tom qab, coj txiaj txheej qas zus mus ces yuav coj mus tam tau Ntxwj sib pes Nyoog √ lub liaj ia teb li chaws kom tau noj, yuav coj mus tam tau Ntxwj sib pes Nyoog liaj ia teb chaws kom tau nrog luag yoog, no su.

*Now you will take the golden papers to the land of Ntxwj Nyoog to use as money forever but you must also leave abundant money behind for your brothers and relatives to spend.*

[*Qeej* plays for 2'44"]

QEEJ SAWV KEV (TSHWM TSHAV)<sup>73</sup>

*Qeej* song for leaving the house for the gravesite

1.

138 words per minute

Range: B1–F#

Duration: 1'32"

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, {koj yuav, leej tub tuag} yuav kaj ntug sis zu los tav nov, xab ib ntuj sis lug los tav nov, leej tub tuag, yuav kaj ntug sis zu los tav nov, √ koj hnov los tsis hnov, koj paub los tsis paub, leej tub tuag. Tav nov, koj kwv koj tij yuav {yuav} koj tub koj ki yuav hluv tis ua hluv os, √ yuav hluv lis tiag, mob tis ua tshuav, koj kwv koj tij, koj tub koj ki, yuav mus ua tau √ nkauj lag qeej sis mis yuav los tsa leej tub tuag yuav sawv lis tsees los mloog qeej, √ yuam leej tub tuag.

*Oh dead one, it is nearly morning and daylight approaches. Are you awake? Do you hear or not? Even although your children, brothers and relatives love you and are in grief, they still have to ask the Lady Qeej to wake you up to listen to the song of the bamboo pipe.*

Tav nov, koj kwv koj tij yuav hluv tis ua hluv, leej tub tuag, yuav mus nrog tau ib zaj nab<sup>74</sup> los sib puag pw, yuav mus nrog tau ib zaj luav sib puag pw mus puv yoog, yuam leej tub tuag. Koj kwv koj tij, koj tub koj ki, yuav hluv tis ua hluv os, yuav mob tis ua tshuav, teg pes lauj yuav mus ua tau √ nkauj lag qeej sis lis mis yuav los tsa leej tub tuag yuav sawv lis tsees los mloog nruas, no su, leej tub tuag, ib su.

*Oh dead one, you have rested well with your companions in the other world for days. Your children, brothers and relatives love you and are in grief, but they have to ask the Lady Qeej to wake you up to listen to the song of the drum.*

[Qeej plays for 3'41"]

2.

138–144 words per minute

Range: B1–F#

Duration: 1'23"

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, tav nov kaj ntug sis zu tuaj txog tim,  
tshav ib ntuj sis lug √ tuaj tis ntxov, leej tub tuag.

*Now, oh dead one, morning has arrived and the morning sun is beginning to shine. It is really time for you to leave, oh dead one.*

Tav nov, tav caij qas sis nraim, caij yuav mus sawv kab, tav  
yoog sis lis nraim, nyoog mus sawv kev, leej tub tuag. Tav caij  
qas nrus, {caij qas nrus}, caij mus tawm rooj, tav nyoog sis zus,  
yoog mus tawm ntsa os, leej tub tuag. Tav nov, leej tub tuag,  
yuav sawv lis tsees yuav los mus. √

*It is time for you to go outside and leave. It is really time for you to depart. You must wake up and leave.*

Ob niam txiv dab qhov rooj lis tag, neb tsis txhob ua daj li ris  
yuav los thaiv leej tub tuag kab, tsis txhob ua do lis ruav los  
mus thaiv leej tub tuag kev, leej tub tuag. Ob niam txiv dab  
qhov rooj lis {paim, √ lis} tag. Tav nov, tav leej tub tuag lub caij  
yuav los mus, leej tub tuag yuav sawv lis tsees, yuav los mus,  
yuav tseg vaj tseg tsev cia, yuav tseg kwv tseg tij cia, tseg  
cub tseg taws tseg, os.

*You two door spirits, husband and wife, please do not block the way. Oh door spirits, it is time for the dead one to depart and to leave the house and abandon the brothers, the relatives, the house, the hearth and the fire, all must be left behind.*

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, √ yuav sawv lis tsees yuav los mus tawm  
rooj mus tawm tau, yuav tawm nra mus tawm dhau, no su, leej tub  
tuag, ib su los mus.

*Oh dead one, now you must leave the house and truly go.*

[Qeej plays for 3'06"]

3.

144 words per minute

Range: B1–F#

Duration: 59"

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, tav nov, {koj yuav}, tav caij sis nrus  
caij mus sawv kab, tav nyoog qas sis nraim yoog mus sawv kev  
leej tub tuag. √ Tav nov, koj yuav sawv lis tsees yuav los mus,  
leej tub tuag.

*Now, oh dead one, it is time for you to leave and you should leave now.*

Tav caij sis zu, yuav yog tau ntxhais nkauj mog  
sis lis mis, yuav teg pes lauj √ yuav mus taws tau lawm niaj ib  
teg mus tsau kaj, lauj pes {xib pes} nag, yuav mus taws tau niaj  
ib teg mus tsau ci os. √

*Now, to begin your journey a beautiful young lady with a bright, burning torch  
will lead the way out of the house.<sup>75</sup>*

Tav nov, yuav los ua tau leej tub tuag  
ntej sis ywv sis lis yi yuav los mus tawm teb. Tav nov, yuav ua  
leej tub tuag ntej sis ywb sis yiv mus tawm {tawm} nra. Yuav mus  
tawm rooj mus tawm tau, √ yuav tawm nra mus tawm dhau os, leej  
tub tuag, ib su los mus.

*Now you must leave the house, going out through the door, leaving everything,  
oh dead one.*

[*Qeej* plays for 2'20"]

4.

144 words per minute

Range: C–G

Duration: 1'33"

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, koj yuav sawv lis tsees yuav los mus  
tawm teb, leej tub tuag. Tav nov, sawv lis tsees los tawm nra,  
leej tub tuag.

*Now, oh dead one, it is time for you to arise and depart from this earth. Now it  
is time to get up with your belongings, oh dead one.*

Peb yuav √ mus tawm teb, peb yuav mus tawm nra. Tav nov, peb yuav mus ncig teb os, peb yuav mus ncig chaw, yuav mus ncig txog los tsis txog, peb yuav mus ncig txhua los tsis txhua. √

*We will search for a place for you outside. Now, we might not search everywhere for it, or we might have to search everywhere for it.*<sup>76</sup>

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, {yuav} peb yuav mus ncig txog, peb yuav mus ncig txhua. Peb yuav mus ncig tau lub √ Suav mab mus tso tseg, yuav mus ncig tau lub tshuav Hmoob mus tso cia, leej tub tuag.

*We will find a place left behind by Chinese and Hmong people, oh dead one.*

Peb yuav mus ncig tau {lub} leej tub tuag lub toj peg qas nraim toj mus zeb lag, √ yuav mus ncig tau leej tub tuag lub toj peg qas nraim toj mus zeb ntsuab, leej tub tuag. Peb yuav mus ncig tau, √ leej tub tuag, lub hauv toj nyiag sis nraim xws qab roob, yog leej tub tuag tej chaw yuav los poob. Yuav los mus ncig tau, leej tub tuag, lub hauv toj √ nyiag lis nraim xws qab tog, yog leej tub tuag tej chaw yuav los so.

*We will find the right place for you, the perfect smooth and green place hidden in the mountains.*<sup>77</sup>

Tav nov, tshav tuaj tshav yuav ci lis iab, √ niaj duab niaj ntxoo yuav qaug sis lis niab.

Tshav tuaj ces tshav yuav ci lis awv, niaj duab niaj ntxoo yuav qaug sis zawv, ib su.

*It is the place for you to come and rest. When the sun shines, the trees will block the sun to give you shade.*<sup>78</sup>

[Qeej plays for 2'45"]

QEEJ SAWV KEV MUS TOM NTXA<sup>79</sup>*Qeej* song for taking leave of the relatives at the grave

1.

168 words per minute

Range: B1–F#

Duration: 1'14"

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, tav nov yuas, niam nkauj hnuv yuav qaij  
 sis lis dav, yuav tav tau, leej tub tuag, lub caij mus sawv kab. √  
 Tav nov, leej tub tuag, yuav yog tau nkauj hnuv yuav qaij  
 sis dev, yuav tav leej tub tuag lub caij mus sawv kev.

*Oh dead one, the sun indicates that it is past midday<sup>80</sup> and now time for you to commence your journey.*

Leej tub tuag, koj yuav mus nrog tau √ ib nqaj ntoo los sib puag ntub,  
 yuav mus nrog tau ib nqaj xyoob los sib puag pw os.

*Oh dead one, you have rested well with the wooden and bamboo logs.<sup>81</sup>*

Leej tub tuag, tav nov, koj yuav tau √ tsoom maj mus hnav txhij,  
 yuav tau tsoom ntuag mus hnav txhua, yuav tau nyiaj txhiag xyab  
 lis ntawv nyob ntawm koj teg nyob ntawm koj taw os, leej tub tuag. √

*Oh dead one, now you have been well dressed and have received all the golden papers and incense to hold in your hands.*

Tav nov, koj yuav sawv lis tsees, yuav yaj sis lug yuav sawv los  
 peb mus. Leej tub tuag, yuav tav caij sis nrus caij mus {tawm  
 qab} √ sawv kab, tav nyoog sis zus nyoog mus sawv kev. Leej tub  
 tuag, koj yuav ua tau niaj dab ntub coj npau suav coob, √ yuav pom  
 tau dej dub dej lis dag yuav tsaws sis {lis} npoos qe txij duav.

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, yuav sawv lis tsees yuav los peb mus, ib su.

*Now, with magic power you will stand up and come with us. Oh dead one, it is time for you to leave. You have had many dreams and you have seen the big river<sup>82</sup> with water rising up to people's waists. Now, oh dead one, it is time for you to leave with us.*

[*Qeej* plays for 3'14"]

## 2. For the Vaj Ntsuab Ntxhoos clan

160 words per minute

Range: B1–F#

Duration: 1'25"

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, tav nov, leej tub tuag, √ koj yuav sawv  
lis tsees os yuav tig ntsej rov los mloog tig muag rov los  
ntsia, leej tub tuag.

*Now, oh dead one, you must wake up and listen to me now. It is time for you to leave, oh dead one.*

Tav nov yuav tav caij sis zus caij mus sawv kab, tav nyoog qas  
sis nraim √ nyoog mus sawv kev, leej tub tuag. {Tshav tuaj ces  
tshav yuav ci sis lis iab os, yuav qaug lis lia.} Tshav tuaj ces  
tshav yuav ci sis lis iab, qaug lis liag tuaj nram hav, zoo  
lis ntoo maj ntoo lis tov yuav qaug ua xyub lis xyo tuaj nram  
tog. √ Ib ncej zeb ncej lis tsuas yuav sawv ntsa lis iab. Tav nov  
ces tav tau leej tub tuag sawv lis tsees sawv los mus lawm koj  
vag koj tsev tshiab yuam, leej tub tuag. √

*Now the sun is lower and you can see the shade under the trees and on their other side. The leafy shelter, which formed a shady umbrella to protect you, has been pulled down. It is time for you to go to your new home now, oh dead one.*

Tav nov, ib nkauj hnuv qaij sis lis da, yuav yog tau niaj duab  
niaj ntxoos yuav qaug liag tuaj nram taug . Ib ncej zeb ncej  
lis tsua yuav √ {Ib ntoo maj ntoo lis tov yuav} qaug ua xyub  
lis xyo tuaj nram hav. Yuav yog tau ncej zeb ncej lis tsua yuav  
sawv ntsa lis awv. √ Tav nov, yuav tav leej tub tuag lub caij  
qas lis nru, leej tub tuag yuav sawv lis tsees yuav los mus  
lawm koj vag los lawm koj chaw nov su, leej tub tuag.

*Now the position of the sun indicates that it is time for you to leave, as you can see shade on the other side of the trees. You must wake up and leave to go to your new home, oh dead one.*

[Qeej plays for 3'23"]

3.

One short+one long word =168

Range: C–G

Duration: 2'27"

{Tav nov, leej tub tuag, tav nov, koj yuav sawv lis tsees os yuav los mus. Leej tub tuag sawv lis tsees yuav los mus. Leej tub tuag, yuav yog tau os. √ Tav nov, yuav yog tau leej tub tuag yuav sawv lis tsees yuav los mus. Yuav yog tau. Tshav tuaj ces √ tshav yuav ci lis iab, yuav tav leej tub tuag caij qas nrus caij mus tawm sawv kab. Leej tub tuag, yuav yog tau os.} √ (34")

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, yuav yog tau os, {tav nov, tshav, yuav yog tau} ntuj yuav tsaus ntuj sis lis nti. Yuav yog tau ntuj tsaus ntuj sis lis nti tuaj tom qab os, yuav tshav leej tub tuag √ lub caij sis lis nri, leej tub tuag yuav mus sawv kab. Teb yuav tsaus teb li nti tuaj tom tsev, yuav tshav leej tub tuag √ lub caij mus sawv kev, leej tub tuag. Yuav yog tau leej tub tuag yuav sawv lis tsees yuav los mus os. √

*Now, oh dead one, it is becoming dark here and it is not suitable for you to stay. Look before you, and you will see the bright sunny road for you to take. This house is now dark and it is not suitable for you to live in. You must leave.*

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, koj yuav los mus ces yuav yog tau nkauj qeeg txiv nraug nruas wb yuav xa tau leej tub tuag yuav nce sis hlo, sis hlwb sis hlo √ txog tej yav kab. Leej tub tuag yuav nplawm lis ntwv nkauj qeeg txiv nraug nruas wb tus ntsuj lis plig rais fib qab. Wb yuav xa tau leej tub tuag √ sawv lis tsees yuav los mus txog tej yav kev, leej tub tuag yuav teg lauj nplawm hmab ces nplawm sis ntw nkauj qeeg txiv nraug nruas wb lis ntsuj lis plig raim fib tse. √

*Now, oh dead one, you will leave, but the two of us, the Lady Qeej and Sir Drum, must lead you and accompany you to your new home. Halfway there, you must use a stick to chase our souls back. We, the Lady Qeej and Sir Drum, will lead you to your new home but halfway there you must use a stick to beat the bushes and chase our souls back to our own home.*

Tav nov, wb nkauj qeeg txiv nraug nruas wb yuav xa tau leej tub tuag yuav mus txog tim toj, leej tub tuag yuav ntiag tauj ntiag tsuag mus, {tsis tau, √ yuav ntiag tauj ntiag tsuag mus yuas} leej tub tuag yuav mus tsis tau, yuav ntiag tauj ntiag tsuag rai. Leej tub tuag, tav nov, nkauj qeeg txiv nraug nruas √ wb yuav zais roj sis zus qab ncej ntseb, wb yuav zais hneev sis



zus tej yav kev, zais roj sis zus tuaj qab plawv luaj, zais  
hneev qab cub tsaov, zais roj sis zus ib neej pes dab, √ ib neeg  
pes txaig yuav roj tsis ntsib, yuav taug tsis tau. (1'53")

*Now, oh dead one. We, the Lady Qeej and Sir Drum, have accompanied you up the hill on this journey and we must now make ourselves and our tracks disappear through the trees. We must conceal our tracks.<sup>83</sup> We, the Lady Qeej and Sir Drum, will conceal our tracks on the way home so that people and ghosts cannot trace our footprints home.<sup>84</sup>*

[Qeej plays for 4'12"]

### QEEJ TXIAJ NTSIM (COB HAUV QHUA)

#### Gifts from your Relatives<sup>85</sup>

One short+one long word=116

Range: C–G

Duration: 1'27"

Tav nov, leej tub tuag, koj yuav tig lub ntsej sis lis nrais rov  
los mloog qeej, tig lub muag qas nrais rov los mloog nruas,  
leej tub tuag. Tav nov, √ leej tub tuag, koj nyob los koj lawm,  
koj lawm koj puas hnov, leej tub tuag.

*Now, oh dead one, you must turn and hearken to the songs of the Lady Qeej and the drum sounds of Sir Drum. Oh dead one, have you gone or not? If you have gone, then do you still hear me or not?*

Tav nov, koj kwv koj tig yuav hlub tis ua hlub os, koj neej koj  
tsa yuav tshua tis ua tshua, koj neej koj tsa √ qhuab tshoob ces  
yog koj txheeb neej, qhuab kuj ces yog koj txheeb tsa. Qhuab  
tshoob ces yog koj txheeb neej, yuav nqa dej coj nqa cawv, qhuab  
kuj ces yog koj txheeb tsa, √ yuav nqa xyab coj nqa ntawv, yuav  
nqa los rau leej tub tuag koj txais kom tau xyoog, leej tub tuag.

*Now, your brothers and relatives have grieved greatly on your passing away. And those who are related in marriage to you and your family will bring you wine, golden papers and incense for you to take to your new world, oh dead one.*

Tav nov, koj kwv koj tij √ {yog txib koj kwv koj tij} txiv coj  
 dab yuav teg pes lauj yuav mus tuav ntahib ntawg lauj pes nag  
 tuav khob cawv, yuav ntawg sis twv sis tawb, qhuab tshoob qhuab  
 kuj, √ ib txiaj xyab txiaj lis ntawv poob qas lis nroos rau leej  
 tub tuag tej qauv npab, yuav nias sis nthis ib txiaj xyab txiaj  
 lis ntawv, nyiaj txiaj xyab lis ntawv, √ txiaj ntsig qas rais  
 poob sis nroos, leej tub tuag, tej qauv tes. Leej tub tuag,  
 yuav los txais kom txais kom tau nyoog, leej tub tuag, ib suv.

*Your brothers have accepted this wine, these golden papers and incense from your relatives and will ceremoniously give them to you by placing them on your hands. Oh dead one, you will accept these golden papers, the incense and the wine and take them with you to use as currency in your next world.*

[*Qeej* plays for 3'40"]

#### NOTES

1. *Nkauj* here means “song, melody.” It is a classificatory term for song genres, such as *nkauj tuag* (songs of grief) and *nkauj tshoob* (wedding songs). This *Nkauj Qeej* (Song of the Qeej) is an example of the poetic structure called *tshooj*, which are verses or poetic couplets for the dead. One *tshooj* consists of two *nqes*, or couplet halves. In secular song, the poetic couplet is called *txum*. *Nkauj* also means “handsome, beautiful” or “young unmarried female” (HEIMBACH 1980, 152). The expression *Nkauj Qeej* reappears in verse 15, where it refers to the instrument itself, “The Lady Qeej.”

2. The *ncoo* or *noob ncoos* (CUBBS 1986, CRYSTAL 1987) is the square, appliquéd funerary pillow placed beneath the head of the deceased. It is usually made by the daughters or daughters-in-law. The textile patterns on the pillow contain a message:

Designs on these pieces recall the tree stumps which remain after highland swidden fields have been cleared, and the padi dikes enclosing irrigation water about lowland fields. They symbolize the wealth in land and abundance of food which the deceased will take with him from this world to the next (CRYSTAL 1987, no page number).

According to CUBBS, “the gridlike designs of the *noob ncoos* symbolize the interlocking arms and legs of lineage members, both past and present” (1986, 23).

3. *Tog maum xees* are song words and are not translatable.

4. The words *qa tsi nws tsis yog* have no meaning, according to Seng Thao and Vangmar Virathone.

5. The word *tag* stresses *tas*, “finished,” which completes the couplet in the next stanza.

6. HEIMBACH provides a White Hmong proverb, which explains death and is very similar to these lines:

*Nplooj tsis zeeg, zoov tsis kaj*  
*Ntiaj tib neeg tsis tuag, ntiaj teb ntim tsis tag.*

If the leaves don't fall, the woods are dark

If people didn't die, the world would not contain them all (1980, 461).

7. *Huv*, “unclean, defiled,” is paired with *puv*, “filled,” in the next line.
8. Text in single quotation marks is heard on the recording, but was not assigned a meaning by Thao or Virathone.
9. Thao revised and corrected his performance during later discussions.
10. Here the rooster, *lau-qaib*, resumes its role, established in the *Qhuab Kev*, as a guide to and protector of the deceased soul. The rooster’s significance is marked in the funeral both pragmatically, through the slaughter of a bird, and metaphorically, during the singing of the *Qhuab Kev* and in the *qeej*’s message to the dead. The sacrifice of a rooster or chicken occurs in many contexts in Hmong and other Southeast Asian ceremony and ritual. Tapp provides an example of a Hmong story which explains “why the cock always precedes man, and acts as a psychopomp which leads the soul of the dead on its journey towards rebirth” (TAPP 1989a, 133). LEMOINE also speaks of the role of the cock as psychopomp (1972 [3], 95). CUBBS notes the use of the symbol of the cockscomb on Hmong hats, adding, “roosters, the most beligerent of creatures, are reputed to fight evil spirits. In addition, they also possess curative powers” (1986, 23).
11. The liver (*siab*) is the seat of the affections, as the heart is in English. See HEIMBACH (1980, 295–97).
12. Underlined text here and hereafter was added by Seng Thao during later revisions, and is not heard on the recording.
13. Ntxwj Nyoog (pronounced “zoo young”) is the Lord of the Otherworld, “who judges the souls of those who are to be reincarnated into animal, vegetable or human form after their death. [He] resides at the top of a mighty mountain, guarding the gates which must be crossed before the souls of the dead can return to the village of their ancestors...once one’s licence for life has expired, only the shaman can intervene, sometimes, with Ntxwj Nyoog for an extension of its term to prolong one’s life on earth...[He] is incorrigibly wicked” (TAPP 1989b, 60).
- MORÉCHAND provides a description of Ntxwj Nyoog and his realm (1969, 161–62). LEMOINE elaborates on his evilness (1972 [3], 91–93). Mottin provides us with a fascinating view of the *qeej* from the inside of Ntxwj Nyoog’s kingdom:
- Although he is nothing more than an evil spirit, Ntxwj Nyoog lives, nonetheless, in a luxurious dwelling, this too inside an enclosure with one door. But make no mistake, all this show is nothing but a trap. Sweet music wafts from one of the great halls, awakening a desire to dance; but it is the music of the mouth organ and drum, the funerary instruments, announcing in advance the death of those who allow themselves to be deceived.
- [Bien qu’il ne soit qu’un démon, Ntxwj Nyoog réside pourtant dans une demeure luxueuse, entourée, elle aussi, d’un clos percé d’une porte. Mais il ne faut pas s’y tromper; tout ce clinquant n’est que piège. De quelque grand salon, s’échappe une musique douce qui donne envie d’aller danser; mais c’est la musique de l’orgue à bouche et du tambour, instruments des funérailles, qui annoncent déjà la mort de ceux qui s’y laissent prendre] (MOTTIN 1982, 30).
14. *Tshav* means “sunny.” This is the only instance of uninterrupted (and repeated) reduplication in this text. RATLIFF notes that reduplication of prosaic words in Hmong functions, not surprisingly, to augment the notion conveyed (1992, 140–41).
15. *Siav* means “life” or “existence.” *Tu siav nrho* means “died” (HEIMBACH 1980, 298), or “life which is cut off.” GAZZOLO provides further contextualization for *siav*: “The term for lifetime is *txoj siav*, ‘life length breath.’ *Txoj* is the classifier for things that come out in lengths: a series of words, thread, wire, rope, roads, or arteries” (1986, 38).
16. *Tav nov* means “now, up to now.” This aperture occurs at the beginning of every verse.

17. *Leej tub tuag* is a form of address to the deceased. It is repeated frequently, reinforcing the imperative that these dangerous instructions are intended for the deceased, and are not addressed to the souls of the many living people in attendance at the funeral. The expression *tav nov, leej tub tuag* carries its own characteristic musical expression in both the sung and the *qeej* renditions of the *Qeej Tu Siav*. Bertrais noted the use of such “leitmotives,” “theme songs,” or “melodious syntagmes” in wedding songs, commenting that

seeing these repetitions in the translation, one should recall that they have a significance, an aim, which they realize powerfully in the original language, instead of seeing in them only the fastidious repetition of primitives who revel in words. And one will try to imagine them, through a translation, into an insipid language without tones (BERTRAIS 1978, 18).

Green Hmong versions address the deceased by name, for example, A Ndjo Li Vo (LEMOINE 1972 [1] 109), or Ab Nruag Lis Vuag, in which respect and affection for the deceased is heard unmistakably in the sounds of the *qeej* (SCHWÖRER-KOHL 1981).

18. *Pa* means “air, breath, gas” (HEIMBACH 1980, 223). TAPP refers to *pa* in a more comprehensive way as “a continuous and creative energy” that travels along the contours of the mountainside: “the fortune of the village depended on this supply of *pa*” (1989a, 150).

19. *Nov ib suv* or *no su* is an ending formula; *noj su* means “to eat the noonday meal.” *No su* is the language of the *qeej*. This closing flourish ends each verse and in many cases is interpreted on the *qeej* by a lengthy *ntiv* or “fingered” section in which the lower drone is heard. GRAHAM noted that words of closure without meaning were also common in Ch’uan Miao songs (1954, 176). SCHWÖRER-KOHL interprets the Green Hmong equivalent *su loo* as “just so, absolutely” and compares it to the Western “Amen” (1981, 614).

20. Graham’s version of “what the liu sheng says” commences in a similar fashion:

Ancestor, this ceremony at the altar is about finished [that is, the song of Showing the Way is complete]. We will now again play the second tune at the altar to guide you on your way. This second altar means that when a person dies, a demon [a benevolent spirit] leads the soul on its way. It guides to the edge of a pool. You see that there it is also raining and the demon then says to you, “It is not raining. It is the tears that your descendants are weeping.”

Then the demon will lead you to a great rock. You will hear the thunder and the rain resounding. Then the demon will say, “You need not fear. This is your descendants playing the liu sheng, and there is also the noise of the beating of a drum. Those noises are partners to you.”

Then the demon will lead you along to your ancestors. The ancestors will guide you to Ntzĩ’s [that is, Ntxwj Nyoog’s] place. This place is a happy land. You must not be sad. You must not be sad for a hundred years (GRAHAM 1954, 52).

21. This underlined text is the later, revised version of the two preceding verses.

22. Mareschal’s version of the words from the Green Hmong of Laos echo this section and anticipate Verses 5 and 7 of Thao’s text:

It is because Ntxwj Nyoog has an evil heart that he has sent documents announcing death to Earth. He has placed these documents beneath the pillow of the person who is now dead. This person took them, and became sick in his heart. Then he began to feel sick in his body and took to his bed. The relatives of the sick person then set about conducting ceremonies with the spirits, and giving the sick man medicines; but in vain, for the sickness continued. Then he dies, and the relatives turn to preparing ceremonial clothing for the funeral rites. They prepare water to wash his face, and when they

have finished washing him, they begin to play the *qeej*. This is the moment when you, the dead person, ask for permission to depart from the spirit of your bedroom door (1). The spirit asks you: “You are a man of this Earth, why do you wish to depart? “The dead man replies that if he is leaving, it is not he who wishes to do so.

[C’est parce que Ntxwj Nyoog a le coeur mauvais qu’il a envoyé sur Terre les papiers qui annoncent la mort. Il a déposé les papiers sous l’oreiller de celui qui est mort. Celui-ci les a pris, et il a commencé à être malade dans son coeur. Et après il a commencé à être malade dans son corps et à se coucher. Les parents du mort se sont mis alors à faire des cérémonies avec les esprits et à lui donner des remèdes; mais en vain, car la maladie continuait. Puis il est mort, et les parents se sont mis à préparer les vêtements de cérémonie pour les funérailles. Ils préparent l’eau pour laver la figure, et quand ils ont fini de laver sa figure, ils commencent à jouer du qeej. C’est le moment où le mort, tu demandes la permission de partir à l’esprit de la porte de ta chambre à coucher. (1). L’esprit te demande: “Tu es un homme de cette Terre, pourquoi veux-tu partir?” Le mort répond que s’il part, ce n’est pas lui qui le veut.]

1. This section is played seven times, for each of the following spirits:

- dlaab rooj txaag—the bedroom spirits
  - dlaab qhov txus—the main entrance spirits
  - dlaab xim kaab—the spirit of the incense sticks in front of the family altar
  - dlaab ncej dlaab—the spirit of the post opposite the main post
  - dlaab quov cub—the spirit of the small entrance
  - dlaab tsoog dlaab—the spirit of the calabash of the house
  - dlaab plag xua dlaab tsi peg—the uphill and downhill spirits outside the house
- (MARESCHAL 1976, 215–16).

Similarly, Schwörer-Kohl reports the seven-times repetition of this section of leave-taking of the spirits of the house in the seventh song of her Thai Green Hmong version:

The spirit of the sleeping room door will bar the way to Ab Nraug Lis Vaug with outstretched arms and outspread fingers. He wants to go, for his field lies too far away. He says, “I am going to put in order the arable land which lies far away at the place of Ntxij Xwb Qos Nyoog with the evil heart, who allowed illness and death to descend to earth. I do not know why I became ill and died.” Puj Saub and the spirit of the door to the bedchamber have now given you permission to leave and be on your way to find your grandmother and your grandfather.

Permission must be asked of six other household spirits: The spirits of the great fireplace, of the transom above the bedchamber of the head of the household, of the small fireplace, of the main door, of the refuse which is swept from the house each day, and of the main post of the house. Divination sticks are thrown after each address to the spirits to ascertain whether the spirit has allowed the dead person to depart (SCHWÖRER-KOHL 1981, 613).

Mareschal’s version continues:

It is Ntxwj Nyoog, who has an evil heart, who sent him a notice telling him to go away. He found these papers under his pillow, took them, and began to fall sick in his body. The dead person! You tried taking solid and liquid medicines, but in vain, and you turned into stone and dry wood. At this moment, your spirit gets up to comb its hair, before thanking the spirit of your bedroom door. Then the spirit of your bedroom door gives you permission to join your ancestors.

[C'est Ntxwj Nyoog, qui a le coeur mauvais, qui lui a envoyé un avis lui disant de s'en aller. Il a trouvé ses papiers sous son oreiller, les a pris, et a commencé à être malade dans son corps: il s'est alité. Le mort! Tu as essayé de prendre des remèdes solides et liquides, mais en vain, et tu es devenu pierre et bois sec. A ce moment là, ton esprit se lève pour peigner tes cheveux, avant de remercier l'esprit de la porte de ta chambre à coucher. Alors, l'esprit de la porte de ta chambre à coucher te donne la permission d'aller rejoindre tes ancêtres] (MARESCHAL 1976, 215–16).

The Laotian White Hmong text provided by Mareschal for the section of the *Qeej Tu Siav* in which the deceased takes leave of the spirits of the house is as follows:

Thus the dead person felt sick in his heart, then in his body. The dead person comes to tell his relatives to go and look for remedies so that he can take care of himself. His relatives find the remedy on the banks of the river. When they get back they pound the remedy in a bowl and pour it into a glass. But the dead person can no longer drink, and he has stopped breathing: his breath has left him.

[Ainsi, le mort s'est senti malade dans son coeur, puis dans son corps. Le mort est venu dire à ses parents d'aller chercher des remèdes pour qu'il puisse se soigner. Ses parents trouvent le remède le long de la rivière. Après être arrivés, ils pilent le remède dans un bol et le versent dans un verre. Mais le mort ne peut plus boire, et il s'est arrêté de respirer: son souffle l'a quitté] (MARESCHAL 1976, 233).

23. The imagery of “nine and eight” to indicate a large amount or number occurs frequently in Hmong sung poetry and stories. For example, BERTRAIS (1978) reports many instances in the wedding songs and MORÉCHAND (1969) in the shamanic texts. Lemoine discusses the imagery of nine suns and eight moons in his version of the *Qhuab Kev*, noting “9 and 8 are a recurrent two-word phrase in all the rites of the Hmong, and are applied indiscriminately to everything that comes in pairs. The recitation of prose however is not susceptible to this type of poetic convention.” [“9 et 8 forment un binôme récurrent dans tous les rites hmong, et s'appliquent à tout ce qui va par paire, indistinctement. Le récit en prose échappe cependant à cette sorte de convention poétique.”] (LEMOINE 1972 [2], footnote 2, 88).

24. Compare this section with Schwörer-Kohl's précis of the Thai Green Hmong songs *Kev Mog* and *Kev Tuag*:

Ab Nruag Lis Vaug became ill and died because the life thread was severed, because his breath stopped. He can no longer speak.

Ab Nruag Lis Vuag is dead forever. Is he only pretending or is he really dead? He is dead, because the thread of life has been severed, because his breath has stopped. He can no longer speak (SCHWÖRER-KOHL 1981, 612).

25. *Qhov tuag* means literally “hole of death” in White Hmong. It is echoed in the next stanza by *qhov plu*, which is Green Hmong for the same expression. *Qhov* is a classifier “used as a part of many words where the idea of emptiness or the idea of a hole has some connection” (HEIMBACH 1980, 271). Gazzolo comments more generally that “the theme of openness (*qhov*) is linked to the theme of paths...both themes are operative in the construction of the house, and the perception of the body” (GAZZOLO 1986, 24).

26. *Hauv paws* means “roots, origins, the source of things.” Tapp contrasts *hauv paws*, the past, with the present, *lub ntsis* (“tips” or “shoots”), and comments that

the “deep structure” of historical time is provided by those things which are permanent,

such as *kevcai*, or “customs”.... Change takes place only at a superficial level, by a constant process of “sloughing off” those things which are inessential (TAPP 1989a, 158–59).

Changes to shamanic practice and to the mortuary ceremony adopted by Hmong in the West, where they must abide by the laws and norms of the countries of resettlement, are seen by Tapp as evidence of “the strength and vitality of a conceptual system to absorb and accommodate change” and of “probably the most coherent metaphorical system ever invented for the expression of man’s relationship to the cosmos” (TAPP 1989a, 192–93).

27. Compare this section with Schwörer-Kohl’s fifth song, *Tu Zaam*, which says “Ab Nraug Lis Vaug is dead since the thread of life has been severed. His children search through his clothes and dress him in his burial clothes. Then they comb his hair with a golden comb and a silver comb” (SCHWÖRER-KOHL 1981, 612).

28. *Kuv tij* is translated here as “your brothers and relatives” but invokes kinship relationships in general in Hmong society between clan, lineage, extended family and residence group. See LEE (1986, 12–32) for a detailed description of White Hmong kinship terminology and structure and RUEY (1960) for a description of kinship relations among the Magpie Miao of southern Szechuan. Barney provides the following account for the Hmong in Laos:

The patrilineal clan system of the Meo [Hmong] dominates their social organization, serving as a primary focus for their culture as a whole by tying together social, political, economic and religious aspects of behaviour. The basic unit of the Meo social structure is the “household” or patrilineal extended family, meaning not only those who live under one roof, but also including all those under the authority of one household head. Thus a single household could include a man’s unmarried daughters, his sons and their wives and children, and possibly his sons’ sons’ children, and might also include a few other feeble or otherwise dependent relatives. All members of the household carry the clan name of the household head in addition to their given name. The clan name refers to descent from a mythical ancestor, and common membership in a clan serves as a bond of kinship and friendship between people who would otherwise be strangers. Members of the same lineage...refer to their lineage mates by a common term meaning “my elders and youngsters” [*kuv tij*] (BARNEY 1967, 275–76).

29. *Tsoos* is clothing for the dead; *maj* and *ntuag* refer to hemp.

30. Shoes of woven hemp are made for the deceased, usually by the same people who are responsible for making the stretcher on which the corpse lies in the house. “These special shoes turn up at the toe; without them, the souls will be unable to cross the big river, walk on treacherous paths, step over valleys of snakes and other living forms, and arrive at the spirit world” (BLIATOUT 1993, 87). CUBBS notes that funeral shoes are made of cloth “so that they will decompose by the time the dead person arrives in the spirit world. The use of more lasting materials would prevent the soul from a ready departure from the body” (1986, 29).

31. Funerary clothing is prepared by children for their parents well in advance of death, according to CUBBS (1986) and CRYSTAL (1987). Designs used in the famous Hmong embroidered textiles, especially those found on baby carriers and funerary pillows, communicate with the spirits. Cubbs notes that White Hmong traditionally provided very large decorative collars for the funerary clothing of their parents, and goes on to say that the layers of costume worn by the dead as well as the funeral coat [often a long white coat with no decoration for the White Hmong] with its long sleeves and large collar guard against the cold of the mountains [as the deceased journeys to the world of the ancestors]. Thick clothing, leg wrappings, and special cloth shoes protect the dead from the “prickly worms” [*kab ntsig*—see verse 10 and note 53], and the “biting worms” (*kab nag*), which mark the passage to the spiritual realm. A

small cloth mask, customarily placed over the nose and mouth of the corpse, shields the deceased from the grasshoppers (*ħooj*) which might fly in his face (CUBBS 1986, 23).

The clothing must be searched for any foreign objects before burial, as “being buried with metal is believed to cause illness and bone disease to the descendants, [and] any metal jewelry, pins or nails must be removed” (BLIATOUT 1993, 92). For this reason, the practice of autopsy is particularly distressing for Hmong in the West, as it is feared that foreign objects might be sewn into the corpse during the procedure and that the subsequent damage to parts of the body will be reflected in the next life (see FALK 1994 and TAPP 1989a, 193).

32. Lemoine’s excerpt of a Laotian Green Hmong verse corresponds closely with this verse:

Now A Ndjo Li Vo [name of the deceased, spelled “Vao” in Lemoine 1979: see note 39] is really going to die, die completely  
 Going to die, his life cut off, saliva comes from his mouth  
 Going to die, his breath cut off, dribble flows from between his teeth...  
 At this moment the younger and the older relative of A Ndjo Li Vo will go to draw cold water, fresh water  
 Go to boil water to wash A Ndjo Li Vo’s body stained with black excrement  
 Then to throw it on the fire in the hearth...  
 Go to take fresh water...make hot water  
 To wash A Ndjo Li Vo’s body, stained with yellow excrement  
 And throw it under the bed  
 Go to wash A Ndjo Li Vo’s face, to make it clean and smooth!

[A présent, A Ndjo Li Vo va mourir pour de bon, mourir complètement  
 Va mourir vie coupée, la salive lui vient à la bouche  
 Va mourir souffle coupé, la bave afflue aux alvéoles des dents...  
 En ce moment le cadet et l’aîné d’A Ndjo Li Vo vont aller puiser de l’eau froide, de l’eau fraîche  
 Vont faire de l’eau chaude pour laver le corps souillé de noirs excréments d’A Ndjo Li Vo Puis la jeter au feu du foyer...  
 Vont prendre de l’eau fraîche...faire de l’eau chaude  
 Pour laver le corps souillé d’ excréments jaunes d’A Ndjo Li Vo  
 Et la jeter sous le lit  
 Vont laver le visage d’A Ndjo Li Vo, qu’il soit propre et lisse!] (LEMOINE 1972 [1] 109).

Note the similarity between this and Schwörer-Kohl’s summary of the sixth song in her Thai Green Hmong version:

The younger and older brothers of Ab Nraug Lis Vaug fetch water from under the wood and under the rock and wash the black and yellow body. Then Ab Nraug Lis Vaug’s body is clean and sweet and will rise to go and meet the grandmothers and grandfathers (SCHWÖRER-KOHL 1981, 613).

33. *Ntauwg* means “to divine concerning the dead”; *ntaus txhib ntauwg* means “to make small sharpened bamboo horns which are used to divine concerning the deceased” (HEIMBACH 1980, 186).

34. The divining sticks are a diagnostic mechanism used throughout the stages of the funeral that are conducted inside the house to ensure that communication is maintained between the living and the soul of the deceased. Symonds provides a thorough description of their use during the recitation of the *Qhuab Kev* (SYMONDS 1991, 236–49). Mottin elaborates



on their use during shamanic sessions (MOTTIN 1982, 97–101). Bliatout discusses how the deceased communicates at mealtimes: “The souls must agree to accept the food. If the two sticks land either with both sides up or both down, there are no agreements; the deceased accepts the food only if one stick lands facing up and the other down. This ritual is performed three times daily until burial” (BLIATOUT 1993, 87). Other commentators describe the pair of sticks as a couple, *yaj kuam yeeb kuam* or the “*kuam*...of yin and the *kuam* of yang. They are also called ‘Lady and Lord Kuam’ or ‘Mother and Father Kuam’...dialogue between the world of men and the world of spirits is established if the two horns land in opposite directions” (TAPP 1989b, 70–71).

35. In this manner the song of the *qeej* describes the assembly of assistants required to perform the funeral rituals. The grieving kin and the sacrificial rooster have already been introduced, as has the *qeej*. Heimbach provides White Hmong terms for fifteen leaders of funeral business (HEIMBACH 1980, 237). Chindarsi lists the tasks involved in a Green Hmong funeral in Thailand (CHINDARSI 1976, 82–85). Bliatout refers to a similar cast of funeral officials, which includes the coordinators of the entire procedure as well as the stretcher- and shoemakers, the food server to the dead, the warrior “who will shoot arrows or fire his gun into the air and run around the house either seven or nine times, depending on the sex of the deceased,” the chefs for meat and vegetables, the rice chefs, the food servers to the living, the firewood gatherers, the water carriers, the rice pounders and corn grinders, the supplier of candles or other sources of light, the accountant, who presides over discussions of the deceased’s financial matters, the coffin makers, and the slayers of the sacrificial oxen (BLIATOUT 1993, 87–88). In the midst of this activity is the weeping and singing of grieving relatives and the sound of the *qeej* and drum. A Hmong funeral is indeed a noisy event. Moréchand describes the near-inaudibility of the sung *Qhuab Kev*: “The words are very difficult to hear in the extremely noisy turmoil of the ceremony” [“elles (les paroles) sont très difficiles à entendre dans le charivari extrêmement bruyant de la cérémonie”] (MORÉCHAND 1969, 99). This is in sharp contrast with childbirth, which is conducted in absolute silence (SYMONDS 1991).

36. *Xub zeb*, “behind a rock,” is paired with *xub tsuag*, “behind the bushes, vegetation,” in the next stanza.

37. *Hniav riam*, “a knife blade,” is paired with *hniav txuas*, “a bush knife with a broad hooked, end” (HEIMBACH 1980, 386), in the next stanza.

38. *Dab* are “the widest category of all the spirits and supernatural forces known to the Hmong. The *dab* are...divided into several groups, of which the most important...are the *dab nyeg* and the *dab qus*. The *dab nyeg* include the domesticated spirits (*dab qhuas*) which inhabit various parts of the Hmong house and protect the household. The *dab qus* are wild, forest spirits “ (TAPP 1989b, 61).

39. Lemoine’s excerpt of a Laotian Green Hmong *K’reng Tou Shia (Qeej Tu Siav)* corresponds with this verse, and with earlier verses which ascertain that the dead has stopped breathing and is “truly dead”:

Now you are really dead, A Ndjo Li Vao,  
Completely dead, your life cut off  
Foam comes from your mouth  
Dead with your breath cut off  
Dribble rises between your teeth

[A présent tu es bien mort A Ndjo Li Vao  
Tout à fait mort, mort vie coupée  
Lécume vient à ta bouche

Mort souffle coupé  
 La bave monte entre tes dents.]

Now here you are, A Ndjo Li Vao  
 Before the Protective Couple [door spirits] of your bedroom door  
 They hold out their arms to bar your way  
 They spread their fingers, cut off your passage  
 The two guardian spirits of the bedroom door  
 Come forward and ask you:  
 “You who came to earth amongst men,  
 Why do you want to leave?”

[A présent te voici A Ndjo Li Vao  
 Devant le Couple Protecteur de la porte de la chambre  
 Ils étendent les bras te barrent le chemin  
 Ils écartent les doigts coupent ta route  
 Les deux esprits gardiens de la porte de la chambre  
 S'avancent et te demandent:  
 “Toi qui es venu sur terre parmi les hommes  
 Pour quoi faire t'en aller?”]

Now you will say to them, A Ndjo Li Vao:  
 “It is because the growing season is over  
 Picking is finished, the harvest gathered.  
 The great Ntxwj Nyoog with the evil heart  
 Has let fall upon the earth a prolifération of sicknesses  
 Has released on the earth his procession of dead people  
 They have embraced the sick soul  
 They have lain down upon the sick soul.

[A présent tu vas leur dire A Ndjo Li Vao:  
 “C'est que les cultures sont finies  
 La cueillette faite la récolte achevée.  
 Le Grand Ndzeu Nyong au coeur mauvais  
 A laissé tomber sur la terre des ribambelles de maladies  
 A lâché sur terre son cortège de morts  
 Elles ont enlacé l'âme malade  
 Elles se sont couchées sur l'âme morte”.]

Now that he is dead, life cut off, foam in his mouth  
 That he is dead, his breath cut off, saliva overflowing from his teeth  
 Now Protective Couple of the bedroom door  
 No longer hold out your arms to bar his way  
 No longer stretch out your fingers to cut off his passage  
 He is going away to join his old (female) Sho,  
 He is going to follow in the footsteps of his old (male) Sho  
 While thanking you, that is all.

[Maintenant qu'il est mort vie coupée écume à la bouche  
 Qu'il est mort souffle coupé salive débordant des dents  
 Maintenant Couple Protecteur de la porte de la chambre  
 N'étendez plus les bras pour pour barrer son chemin

N'écarterz plus les doigts pour lui couper sa route  
 Il s'en va à la suite de sa vieille Sho,  
 Il va suivre à la trace son vieux Sho  
 En vous remerciant, voilà tout ] (LEMOINE 1979, 198–200).

40. *Ob*: “a couple, two”; *niam txiv*: “husband and wife,” the pair which guards the door. Pairs and couples dominate the world of personified natural forces and semilegendary heroic figures conjured in both the *Qhuab Kev* and the *Qeej Tu Siav*. In S. Thao's *Qhuab Kev*, for example, we meet the primordial couple, Nkauj Iab and Nraug Oov, their first- and second-born sons, Qas Tus and Qas Nplus, the primordial hen and rooster, Nkauj Qaib and Nraug Qaib, as well as the pairs of guardian spirits of the bedroom, the front and back doors, the household posts, the main living area, the altar, the house, and outdoor venues such as the stables, the pig houses, the village, and the forest ( S. THAO, 1992a). In the *Qeej Tu Siav*, the most prominent couple is the *qeej* and the drum, Nkauj Qeej and Nraug Nruas. Lemoine goes so far as to say that “Hmong thinking is essentially geared to binary oppositions. All beings, particularly men, spirits, animals, come in pairs and couples” [“la pensée Hmong est essentiellement orientée vers les oppositions binaires. Tous les êtres, en particulier hommes, génies, animaux, vont par paires et par couples”] (LEMOINE 1972 [2], 90).

41. *Dab qhov rooj* is the spirit which guards the downhill side of the house, the door by which spirits enter (HEIMBACH 1980, 27). Moréchand provides a description of the importance of this door:

This main doorway is the most beautiful in the house. It is made with care, with two heavy wooden doors each made from a single piece cut from solid wood, a wide wood-en transverse, placed on the sill which you step over on entering, and two solid uprights.

[Cette porte principale est la plus belle de la maison. Elle est fabriqué avec un certain soin, avec deux lourds battants de bois faits chacun d'un seul morceau taillé dans la masse, une grosse traverse de bois, posée sur le seuil, que l'on enjambe en entrant, et deux solides montants] (MORÉCHAND 1969, 124–25).

Graham reports a “cult of worshipping the door” amongst the Ch'uan Miao and the Hua Miao in Szechuan and describes a pig sacrifice to the door (GRAHAM 1937, 86). Hudspeth, too, describes “the cult of the door” amongst the Miao of southwest China, noting that “the door has the power to keep away illness, evil spirit, and hostile influences of every description...in some indeterminate way a divinity or guardian spirit is connected with the door” (HUDSPETH 1922, 410).

42. *Ncej dab ncej li qhua* are spirits of the whole house. The *ncej dab* is “the main pillar or post of the house...the placenta of male children are buried at the base of the *ncej dab*” (HEIMBACH 1980, 147). The placenta, along with the amniotic sac and part of the umbilical cord or “lifeline” (*txoj hlab nlaw*) are known collectively as the “birth shirt” (*lub tsow tus menyuas*). It is regarded as “the connection between the earth and the ancestors” (SYMONDS 1991, 180). At death, the soul of the deceased must collect its birth shirt from its place of birth to wear on the journey to the world of the ancestors. These instructions are explicitly delivered in the *Qhuab Kev*:

Now you are well dressed and you will be arriving at your birthplace, the house where you were born. If you are female then you must search for your placenta under the bedroom or under the kitchen posts. If you are male then you must search for your placenta under the household posts. You must pick up your placenta, clean it and wear it

so that you can find your way to your grandparents' world (S. Thao, *Qhuab Kev*, verse 9, recorded by Falk in Melbourne on 26 June 1992 and translated by Virathone).

For Hmong in the West, the metaphoric retrieval of the birthshirt poses significant problems. For those born in Laos and resettled in Australia, for example, the soul requires guidance for overseas travel to the homeland. Saykao speculates that the funeral text in Australia will need to include reference to a journey to Melbourne airport in order to board a Qantas plane, which will take the soul to mainland Southeast Asia, probably Thailand, through all the customs and immigration procedures at both ends of the journey, and across the Mekong River to Laos. For Hmong born in Melbourne, Australia, guidance of the soul to the Royal Women's Hospital will be necessary in order to retrieve the placenta, which normally is destroyed after childbirth in Western hospitals. In addition, house or apartment construction design in the West generally precludes the possibility of tampering with foundations in order to bury the afterbirth.

43. *Dab vaj dab li tsev* is the guardian or chief spirit of the house. For a detailed description of White Hmong house construction and the sites of attendant household spirits, see SYMONDS (1991, 53–60) and Tapp, who notes, “the Hmong house... is truly a reflection of the cosmos. If the roof and rafters of the house represent the vault of heaven, then the earthen floor represents the world of nature. Between heaven and earth is the world of men and social life” (TAPP 1989b, 63). Symonds also emphasizes the importance of the inside of the house, “the place where lineage and family spirits dwell, as opposed to the outside where wild and dangerous spirits roam. It is within this cosmological abode that souls come, are cared for, and from which they ideally depart... to go to the otherworld” (SYMONDS 1991, 59, also 221). HEIMBACH provides a diagram of the house frame with named parts (1980, 350).

44. *Pog* is the paternal grandmother; *yawg* is the paternal grandfather. According to Virathone, in Green Hmong these terms are *poj* and *yawm* respectively: these words are used in Verse 11. Lee gives *yawm* for maternal grandfather in White Hmong (LEE 1986, 2) while RATLIFF (1992, 85) notes *yawm* for maternal grandfather and *yawg* for paternal grandfather, and *poj* and *pog* for maternal and paternal grandmother, respectively.

45. Tapp contextualizes the “big river” as follows:

The Otherworld is thought of as a harsh, mountainous landscape, similar to that of the natural world... At the meeting of the two worlds there is a great piece of water, crossed by a bridge. Here the souls of men can meet with the spirits and communicate with them, although none know which are spirits and which men. Sometimes there is said to be a market-place on or around this bridge, where men and spirits trade, deal, bargain with each other... Twelve great mountains, each higher than the others, ascending into the heavens, lead to the great mountain inhabited by Ntxwj Nyug [Nyoo], above which Siv Yis dwells. The soul of the dead must traverse these mountains in order first to reach Ntxwj Nyug, where he is judged, and then the village of his ancestors where he will dwell for a while before being reincarnated (TAPP 1989b, 64).

46. *Zaj* here means “dragon.” The semantic field for *zaj* also encompasses song, as in *zaj qeej* (ritual *qeej* songs) and *zaj tshoob* (ritual wedding songs). *Zaj* is “a classifier for sayings, speeches, poems, hymns, chapters” (HEIMBACH 1980, 433). See note 50 for more about the dragon.

47. *Qab kev* is the downhill side of the trail. It is balanced by and paired with *qaum kev*, “uphill side of the trail,” further on in this stanza. Tapp has noted, in the context of his discussion of the origins of Hmong *loojmem* or geomancy, that “expressions of mountainous imagery are far more common in the classification systems of upland-dwelling minorities such

as the Hmong than they are in the classification systems of the great wet-rice cultivating mass of the Chinese population” and that this imagery is found in upslope/downslope dichotomies (TAPP 1986, 87 and footnote 1, 94).

48. *Qaum kev* is the uphill side of the trail.

49. *Cov ntaub cov ntauv* was translated here by Virathone as “travel documents,” which are the papers and incense surrounding the corpse.

50. The trope of the dragon occurs frequently in Hmong oral literature. Lee Yang’s account of the origin of ritual knowledge tells how, in the beginning, only the dragon knew all things. It was the dragon who spit his saliva into the mouths of the Hmong to ensure that their memory would retain knowledge about funeral and wedding ritual (*zaj qeej* and *zaj tshoob* respectively) when Hmong books and writing were lost. It was the dragon, too, who decreed that the singing of the *Qhuab Kev* was not sufficient advice at funerals, as dead people would not hear it. Further instructions had to be given in the *zaj qeej* (personal communication September 3, 2000). Tapp also points out that

the primary metaphor in the geomantic idiom for the topography of the land is precisely that of the *dragon*, which is believed to inform all the contours of the mountain ridges and watercourses, to the extent that the Hmong *term* for geomancy, *loojmem*, or the “veins of the dragon,” refers directly to the metaphor of the dragon as an image of natural, unrestrained energy (TAPP 1989a, 150–51, emphasis in the original).

Geomancy or *loojmem* plays a significant role in the choice of the burial site, as will be seen below.

The balancing trope of the tiger is also present in Hmong cosmology. In Verse 6 of P. N. Thao’s version of the *qeej*’s text, it is the tiger, not the dragon, that the deceased must elude: “Once you see a very big tiger, you have to throw your shoes and umbrella into the tiger’s mouth, so that you can pass through” (THAO 1993, 49). Real tigers are certainly feared, and mythical tigers play a crucial role in many Hmong legends—see, for example, those related in JOHNSON (1985), BESSAC (1988), and RADLEY (1986). The binary opposition of the dragon and the tiger has probably been borrowed from Chinese fengshui principles (see FEUCHTWANG 1974, 141–58) and adapted by the Hmong. Tapp notes that “the White Tiger and the Azure Dragon represent the two fundamental polar oppositions of the system of geomancy practised by the Chinese” (TAPP 1989a, 166), but the tiger plays a more ambiguous part in Hmong expressions of identity. RADLEY tells how the Green Hmong of Thailand take precautions against the soul of the deceased being seized by a tiger (1986, 412). He further suggests that the dragon represents the social world, while the tiger stands for an unsocialized, anarchic state associated with death: “unsocialised human spirits can become tigers” (RADLEY 1986, 414). A Hmong proverb tells *Pom tsov yuav tuag, Pom nom yuav pluag*: “See a tiger, you will die; See an official, you will be poor” (VANG and LEWIS 1984, 73). In this way the elaborate texts of the *Qhuab Kev* and the *Qeej Tu Siav* can be interpreted as acts that both plumb the mysteries of death by initiating the deceased soul into the Hmong story of creation while at the same time separating the soul from the social world by instructing it about the Hmong way of death. See WESSING (1986) for a comparative account of the place of the tiger in other Southeast Asian epistemologies.

51. Images of a literate, non-Hmong bureaucracy dominate this section. Hmong stories about their loss of books and writing are numerous (see FALK 2003/2004). Mueggler reports that writing was regarded as a “currency for communication” between cultural and linguistic borders, and between living and spiritual worlds amongst the L̄lōp’ò, another minority group in southwest China (MUEGGLER 2001, 128–29). Similarly, Tapp has noted that, for the Hmong, “much of the world which the shaman traverses is modelled on the Chinese state

bureaucracy, where divinities are depicted as celestial officials seated behind gigantic writing-desks issuing, extending, and remanding licences for life and health in a Kafkaesque cosmology of control and terror" (TAPP 2000, 95).

52. *Kab ntsig* is a "hairy caterpillar which stings on contact" (HEIMBACH 1980, 73). Hemp shoes protect the feet against its bite. The way to the kingdom of Ntxwj Nyooq "is fraught with ordeals: one mountain is made up of hairy caterpillars (there are fatally poisonous caterpillars in Asia) which can only be safely crossed with the aid of a pair of hemp slippers, which are consequently placed on corpses' feet" (TAPP 1989b, 64). P. N. THAO's Verse 5 of the *qeej*'s text concerns the donning of shoes to cross the giant caterpillars' domain (1993, 49).

53. *Ntsu quav zaj* is slippery, mossy rock, literally "dragon dung" (HEIMBACH 1980, 203).

54. See note 23.

55. *Mab Suav* are plains (lowland) people and Chinese people (HEIMBACH 1980, 124)—that is, others, not us, people who are not *peb Hmong* ("We Hmong"). Hmong identity is defined through fluctuating processes of opposition, assimilation, and appropriation of Chinese or "other people's" characteristics: see in particular TAPP (1989a and 2000), but also HASSOUN (1985, 117) for further contextualization of "us" and "them" by Hmong in France; CRYSTAL (1987) for a discussion of the dichotomies between mountain dwellers and inhabitants of the lowlands in southeast Asia; SCHEIN (2000) for an extended discussion of the relationship between the Miao and other groups in China; LEE (1996 and 1998) for insider descriptions of what it means to be Hmong in diaspora; and BARNEY (1967) for the relationship between the upland "Meo" and lowland groups in Laos. RUSSELL (1989) provides case studies of upland-lowland contrasts in various mainland Southeast Asian societies, but not specifically for the Hmong.

This verse is similar in intent to P. N. THAO's Verse 7:

When you see three routes, one of which goes to the left, one of which goes to the middle, and one goes to the right, you should choose the right route because that route will lead you to your ancestors and your relatives (1993, 50).

56. "Here we can see something of the influence of the traditional environment of the Hmong in China, for it was the market-place which must have marked the traditional boundaries between the forested, mountainous world of the Hmong, and the urban bureaucratic world of the lowlands: supremely a place of exchange, transformation and substitution" (TAPP 1989a, 64). The soul of the dead also passes through a crossroads between the natural world and the otherworld, encountering Chinese traders. This threshold is marked by a large piece of water and a bridge where the souls of men meet and communicate with the spirits.

57. *Poj* is Green Hmong for "maternal grandmother;" *yaum* is White Hmong for "maternal grandfather." See note 44.

58. The Ch'uan Miao words cited by Graham as "What the Liu Sheng says during the third tune, when guiding the soul to heaven" correspond broadly in intent with this and the following verses:

The soul has come. The soul has come. The soul has come to hear the liu sheng. The liu sheng will be your companion and will escort you up to Ntzi's house. You must go with your ancestors. You go to the sky. In your hand you must take a solo tree ["a sort of magical fengshui tree in the moon and elsewhere"]. When I am playing the liu sheng, I will escort you to Ntzi's land. The relatives and friends will come. Your sisters are about to arrive. Everybody will come and escort you away. Your death after a hundred years means that today your hundred years are completed ["This is said to com-

fort and flatter the soul of the dead”]. We will all come and dance, and will welcome you up to Ntzi’s heaven. You must live there a hundred years.

What the Liu Sheng says when played the fourth time to guide the departed soul to heaven:

The soul nourishes one’s body. When one dies, he must return to the mountain. The filial son must sweep the house clean. The friends and guests will come. The uncles and your sisters will arrive. They will see you dead in the coffin. You will be unable to talk to them. They will all feel sorry about it. When you hear the sound of the drum and the liu sheng, there will be 70 or 80 liu shengs escorting you to the grave (on the mountain where the Ch’uan Miao used to be buried). The sounds of 92 drums being beaten will escort you to Ntzi’s place. When you have gone, only your orphan sons and daughters will remain, weeping (GRAHAM 1954, 52–53; square brackets indicate Graham’s footnotes).

59. Steps and ladders (*ntaiiv*) and paths (*kev*) are common idioms for describing transition from one state to another or from one world to another. Hmong shamanic ritual uses this imagery (see MOTTIN 1982 and MORÉCHAND 1969), as do many other shamanic traditions (ELIADE 1964). The image of the ladder occurs early, in Verse 2, of P. N. THAO’s version:

When you get to the gate of heaven, you have to ask Ntxwj Nyoog to let down the ladder from heaven. The ladder has 13 steps and each day you climb only one step. It will take you 13 days to climb the silver ladder (1993, 49).

60. *Plam si lis plaws* is onomatopoeic, describing the opening of locks.

61. *Plam li pluav* is also onomatopoeic, another way of describing the opening of a lock.

62. *Kwj ha* is a tone change from *hav*, and means “gully-valley,” or “valley.” This example of a two-word *sandhi* compound is cited by RATLIFF, who notes that “repetition with a slight variation in four-word coordinative constructions is typical of Hmong figurative language.... It is found in miniature in a number of two-word *sandhi* compounds” (1992, 44). *Kwj ha*, “deep ravine” and *kuj zeb*, “rocky valley” in this stanza are metaphors for dangerous or menacing places. Virathone explained that leaping from a mountain is a common way for Hmong to commit suicide (personal communication, 22 April 2002).

63. *Npoo heb*, “coffin,” is paired with *npoo ntxa*, “grave,” in the next couplet. The imagery here is of the soul flying to the world of the ancestors.

64. The soul of the sacrificed rooster has accompanied the soul of the deceased throughout the journey. Now the rooster performs its last vital duty, which has been described by Bourotte for the White Hmong of northern Laos as follows:

In the Other World, the heavenly roosters reply to the crow of this rooster. The assistant offers the magic directions one by one, telling the deceased that only one of these directions is the correct one for the deceased to follow. The rooster is required to crow each time he enters one of the heavenly villages. Each time he sends forth his cry at the edge of a village which is not appropriate, the celestial roosters will remain silent. But at the gateway to the appropriate village, the celestial roosters will reply [to your cock’s crow] and the deceased will know that he has arrived. All this takes place in the Other World, between the dead person and his rooster, which is dead too. Living people understand none of it.

[Dans l’autre monde, au chant de ce coq répondent les coqs célestes. L’assistant propose l’une après l’autre des directions magiques en informant le défunt qu’une seule de ces directions est la bonne et doit conduire à destination. Le coq a mission de

chanter chaque fois qu'il entre dans un village céleste. Chaque fois qu'il lancera son appel à la lisière d'un village qui ne convient pas, les coqs célestes resteront muets. Mais à la porte du village convenable, les coqs célestes répondront et le mort saura qu'il est arrivé. Tout ceci se passe dans l'autre monde entre le mort et son coq, mort également. Les vivants ne peuvent se rendre compte de rien] (BOUROTTE 1943, 48).

65. *Plaj xab* or *txhab*, "granary," is paired with *plaj tsev*, "house," in the next couplet. The *qeej* is not able to play *txhab*, according to Thao.

66. *Nkaj* here means "young unmarried female," while *nraug* means "unmarried man." Virathone translated the expression as "The Lady Qeej and Mr Drum." RATLIFF includes the expression *nkaj qeej nraug nruas* in a list of tone *sandhi* compounds arranged by high frequency second word (1992, 212). Thao explained that the *qeej* cannot play its name, requiring the tone change *qeej* > *qeej*. Here the text refers explicitly to its pair of executants, the players of the *qeej* and the funeral drum. MARESCHAL (1976) provides a comprehensive description of the construction and musical and ritual role of the drum. SYMONDS describes the construction of the drum in a Thai Hmong village (1991, 225) and the role of the drum during the funeral (1991, 241–50).

67. *Nees* means "horse," a metaphor for the stretcher or bier on which the corpse is placed for its departure from the house. Mareschal's excerpt of the *qeej*'s words for this part of the funeral among Green Hmong in Laos is as follows:

Then the spirits of the house leave him free to depart, and that is when the relatives of the deceased prepare the horse. The dead person mounts the horse and arrives in front of the sons of Ntxwj Nyoog who keep watch over the entry to the dwelling place of the ancestors. When the dead person arrives, they ask him "Who sent you here?" and he replies, "The bamboos (pipes) which make music sent me here." Then the two sons of Ntxwj Nyoog whip the horse to permit it to leave. The deceased! You cross the door under the surveillance of the two sons of Ntxwj Nyoog, and you leave to rejoin your ancestors.

[Puis les esprits de la maison le laissent libre de partir, et c'est alors que les parents du mort préparent le cheval. Le mort monte à cheval et arrive devant les fils de Ntxwj Nyoog qui surveillent l'entrée du séjour des ancêtres. Quand le mort arrive, ceux-ci lui demandent "Qui t'a envoyé ici?" et il répond, "Ce sont les bambous qui font de la musique [qeej] qui m'ont envoyé ici". Alors, les deux fils de Ntxwj Nyoog fouettent le cheval pour lui permettre de partir.

Le mort! Tu traverses la porte sous la surveillance des deux fils de Ntxwj Nyoog, et tu pars pour rejoindre tes ancêtres] (MARESCHAL 1976, 216).

His White Hmong version of the *Qeej Tsa Nees* is as follows:

Is the dead person really dead or not? It really seems that he is not dead, but he is already dead. Then the dead person comes to say to a member of his family that he is truly dead. This family member will take an ox's horn and blow into it nine times while circling the house. A relative takes the ox's horn, brings it to his teeth and replies nine times around the house.

[Le mort est-il bien mort ou non? Il semble bien qu'il ne soit pas mort, mais il est déjà mort. Alors, le mort vient dire à un membre de sa famille qu'il est vraiment mort. Ce membre de sa famille va prendre une corne de boeuf et souffler neuf fois dedans en tournant autour de la maison. Un parent prend la corne de boeuf, la porte à ses dents et répond neuf fois autour de la maison] (MARESCHAL 1976, 233).



68. *Qhua* are those not of the same surname or clan (HEIMBACH 1980, 272), that is, guests who are not kin.

69. *Haus dej haus cauw* is a four-word expressive phrase which means “to drink rice wine” in this context.

70. Divination sticks are thrown at the end of each of these verses to provide an indication of whether or not the soul has accepted these gifts and offerings.

71. *Yaj ceeb* is the world of light.

72. *Yeeb ceeb* is the world of darkness. The Hmong division of the cosmos into the two worlds of light and darkness is described by TAPP (1989b, 60), MORÉCHAND (1969, 176–77 and 217–18), GAZZOLO (1986, 11), and SYMONDS (1991, 43–45), who summarizes this dualism: “[the World of Light (*yaj ceeb*)] is the material world of the living, while [the World of Darkness (*yeeb ceeb*)] is the metaphysical spirit world.... For the Hmong, the two worlds are connected by the ancestors.... Bridges, ladders and doors are the ways to enter and leave the two connected worlds.” Both TAPP (1989a, 157) and MORÉCHAND (1969) comment that the Hmong *yeeb* and *yaj* correspond to the Chinese yin and yang, respectively.

73. Graham’s “What the Liu sheng says the last time it is played at the funeral ceremony” corresponds to this section:

It is daybreak this morning. The dead person will go out. The dead person will go out of the door. The earth will welcome you to Ntzi’s house. The earth will take you to Ntzi’s heaven. The earth will take you to the demon’s place. Let Hmong Bo Sua go. Let Hmong Je Sua go. Hmong Bo Sua has gone. Hmong Je Sua has gone. All the women and men have gone. Quickly escort the departed soul. Let the relatives and friends quickly go.

What beats the drum? A club beats the drum. What is the drum beaten with? The drum is beaten with two pieces of wood. What is that? That is a cliff. Your small sons and daughters escort you out of the door. Your small sons and daughters escort you upon the mountain. Go quickly. You must not look. When 12 days have passed, your sons and daughters will come and welcome you back. Then you may lie on the bed and drink wine and eat rice. The song is ended [this tune is also played three times. When it is finished the K’a gei takes hold of the coffin and leads it as it is carried outside. Then the filial sons kneel outside the house. Their wives light a torch just before it is taken outside, the coffin is tied up so that it can be carried away and buried] (GRAHAM 1954, 53).

74. *Zaj nab* are snakes and *zaj luav* are rabbits. The intention is to describe the understanding that no one knows where the soul goes after death, but it is to some place occupied by non-human others.

75. According to BLIATOUT, this young woman is usually either the daughter or daughter-in-law of the deceased (1993, 91); see also CHINDARSI (1976). Apart from preparing and serving food and singing laments, women do not play an official role in funeral ritual. In Symonds’s account of the funeral of a man in northern Thailand, the young woman bearing the torch is not mentioned. Nor are women included in the trek from the site of the sacrifice of the oxen to the burial ground. “Women, the Hmong said, are more easily scared than men: if women went, they might loose [sic] their souls and become sick” (SYMONDS 1991, 251).

76. This section refers to the choice of a gravesite. The welfare of one’s descendants depends upon the auspicious choice of a burial site. The use of geomantic principles to determine an appropriate grave site is discussed at some length and illustrated by case studies in TAPP (1989a, 147–66; also 1986, 90). He observes that the Hmong protocols for geomancy, or *loo-jmem* (“veins of the dragon”) is a deeply internalized one, intersecting with the individual life-cycle at critical junctures, such as on the establishment of a house or the death of a relative.

Besides determining the location of village and burial sites...the system was physiognomic in aspect and pragmatic in purpose...it was also said that the head of the corpse should be turned away from the direction of the sunrise, since if the deceased should awaken and open his eyes, he would be unable to see and watch over his descendants (TAPP 1989a, 153).

For Hmong in the West, choice of burial site is usually not an option, as Hayes reports:

The Hmong are accustomed to selecting their own burial spot that, given the relatively sparse population of their mountainous homeland, did not require official or legal approval. As one elder discussed in the interview: 'It is difficult to accept that I cannot have freedom to decide where I am to be buried. In Laos the old found comfort knowing where they were to be placed' (HAYES 1987, 67).

Vang and Lewis provide a diagrammatic explanation of the location of auspicious gravesites, based on MOTTIN (1980, 131–33):

If the mountains surrounding the gravesite are determined to have the "majesty of the dragon" (*zaj huj chim*), then the offspring will be intelligent, respectable, and persons of value. If [the mountains have] the "majesty of the tiger" (*tsov huj chim*)...then the offspring will be unsuccessful and miserable (VANG and LEWIS 1984, 44–45).

77. Compare P. N. THAO's text for the *Qeej Sawv Kev*:

You will go and be hugged with the hill side, and sleep with the hillside  
Go and hugged [be hugged by] the black hill, and sleep with the landscape (1993, 63)

78. At this point the deceased, if of the Vang clan, is instructed to rest in the shade of two leafy branches, at an intermediary station between the house and the gravesite. Instructions for this clan for proceeding to the gravesite are contained in section 2 of the *Qeej Sawv Kev Mus Tom Nixa*.

79. Bourotte comments of this stage of the funeral among White Hmong in northern Laos that

The drum beats, the frantic qeej reaches the limits of its volume, as though this extravagant excess of melodies could saturate the deceased (soul) with music and cause it to contemplate the advantages of the silence of the grave.

[Le tam-tam bat, le k reng [qeej] s'exaspère à la limite de sa sonorité comme si on voulait par cette débauche de mélodies saturer le mort de musique et lui faire concevoir les avantages du silence.] (BOUROTTE 1943, 54).

80. Bliatout notes that

It is culturally inappropriate to bury someone in the morning because (a) it is believed that the souls of the dead leave the body at sunset, and if the corpse is buried too early, the souls may return to bother the living; and (b) an auspicious time usually falls sometime in the afternoon. As midafternoon approaches, the funeral director sees to it that everyone needed is present. The reed pipe player, through long experience, knows when to start the funeral procession [and] leads the procession. The funeral drum is tied onto the back of a man who carries it so that the drum, with its drummer following behind, can accompany the funeral procession (BLIATOUT 1993, 91).

Tapp contextualizes the proscriptions about the time of burial within the geomantic system, which also determines the place of burial:

The course of the *loojmem*, or dragon veins, which convey the breath of the dragon, is down this central spur [of the mountains], and the corpse must be buried at a certain

time of day, usually in the later afternoon, if the *tus plig* (soul) of the deceased is to travel with it. Preferably this should take place...in the time of the tiger, since this is a “strong” time.... The *loojmem* usually “flies out” at night...and “returns” during the day. However, since “as man’s evening is the morning of the spirits, so man’s morning is the evening of the spirits,” the soul of the deceased must go with the *loojmem* in the spiritual morning. Thus the *plig* of the deceased will “catch” the *loojmem* before it “flies out” at night, and “ride” it, as one “rides a tiger,” to the place of rebirth (TAPP 1989a, 153).

81. That is, the time for resting on the bier is over.

82. The “big river” is the Mekong. The soul of Hmong from Laos must cross it, figuratively, to return to the original ancestral homelands in China.

83. The red string tied to the left wrist of the *qeej* player during funerals also functions to deceive the spirits, who will think that the piper is bleeding, and will not want his soul to stay in the other world (Virathone, personal communication, 22 April 2002).

84. This crucial part of the *qeej*’s instructions extricates the souls of the living instruments—the Lady *Qeej* and Sir Drum—and those of their players from the land of the dead and returns them to the world of the living. The twelfth song in Schwörer-Kohl’s Thai Green Hmong version, *Zais Ruaj Zais Neev*, also refers to footprints:

Tsi Tsuj?	Which footsteps?
Peb Tsuj!	Our footsteps!
Tsi Neev?	Which footmarks?
Peb Neev!	Our footmarks!
Peb Tsuj Peb Neev!	Our footsteps, our footmarks!
Peb Tsuj Peb Neev!	Our footsteps, our footmarks!
Peb Tsuj Peb Neev Ntxeb	Our footsteps, our footmarks under the percussion instrument
Peb Tsuj Peb Neev Nruag	Our footsteps, our footmarks under the drum

(SCHWÖRER-KOHL 1981, 615).

Verse 9 of P. N. Thao’s *Qeej Tu Siav* finds the *qeej* employing the same lies and conundrums found in many versions of the *Qhuab Kev* (see FALK 1996):

Once you get there, your relatives will ask you who sent you. You should answer that you are not sure, you know only that the person who sent you had an ear as big as a fan and an eye as big as a cup. Your relatives or ancestors will ask you, “Can we use a cow and a horse to chase and capture the person who sent you?” You should answer that the person will never be captured because he came with the cloud and went with the wind. Also say, “You will never capture him because he has guns and knives. If you follow him you will only be killed. If he came today, he already went back yesterday.” So, the ancestors will give up on the chase (FALK 1993, 50).

85. This song belongs to the repertoire which is played at a further ceremony of separation of the living and the dead held thirteen days after the funeral, when the soul of the deceased is invited back to the family home and the songs of offering of livestock, golden papers and wine are played once more by the *qeej*. This time, the corpse is absent.

## REFERENCES CITED

- BARNEY, G. Linwood  
 1967 The Meo of Xieng Khouang Province, Laos. In *Southeast Asian Tribes, Minorities and Nations*, vol. 1, ed. Kunstadter, Peter, 271–94. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- BERTRAIS, Yves  
 1978 *The Traditional Marriage among the White Hmong of Thailand and Laos*. Translated from the French by Mr R. J. F. Davies, Miss Marie Eva Boyer, and Miss Ghirlando. Chiangmai, Thailand: Hmong Center.
- BESSAC, Susanne  
 1988 *Embroidered Hmong Story Cloths*. Contributions to Anthropology, Number 9. Missoula: University of Montana.
- BLIATOUT, Bruce Thowpaou  
 1993 Hmong death customs: Traditional and acculturated. In *Ethnic Variations in Dying, Death and Grief: Diversity in Universality*, ed. Irish, Donald P., Kathleen F. Lundquist, and Vivian Jenkins Nelsen, 79–100. Washington: Taylor and Francis.
- BOUROTTE, B.  
 1943 Mariages et funérailles chez les Mèo [Méo] Blancs de la région de Nong-Het (Tran Ninh). *Bulletin et Travaux* 6: 33–57. Institut Indochinois pour l'Étude de l'Homme, Hanoi.
- CHINDARSI, Nusit  
 1976 *The Religion of the Hmong Njua*. Bangkok: The Siam Society.
- CRYSTAL, Eric  
 1987 Buffalo heads and sacred threads: Hmong culture of the Southeast Asian highlands. In *Textiles as Texts: Arts of Hmong Women from Laos*, ed. Catlin, Amy. Unnumbered exhibition catalogue. Los Angeles: The Women's Building.
- CUBBS, Joanne, ed.  
 1986 *Hmong Art: Tradition and Change*. Sheboygan: John Michael Kohler Arts Centre.
- ELIADE, Mircea  
 1964 *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. Trans. Trask, W. R. New York: Bollingen Foundation.
- FALK, Catherine  
 1994 Roots and crowns: The Hmong funeral ceremony from Laos to Australia. *Tirra Tirra* 4 (4): 19–24.  
 1996 Upon meeting the ancestors: The Hmong funeral ritual in Asia and Australia. *Hmong Studies Journal* 1 (1): [http://members.aol.com/hmongstudiesjrnl/HSJv1n1\\_FalkFr.html](http://members.aol.com/hmongstudiesjrnl/HSJv1n1_FalkFr.html)  
 Accessed 5 December 1996.  
 2003/2004 The dragon taught us: Hmong stories about the origin of the free reed pipes *qeej*. *Journal of Asian Music* 34 (2): 17–56.
- FEUCHTWANG, Stephan D. R.  
 1974 *An Anthropological Analysis of Chinese Geomancy*. Vientiane: Editions Vithagna.
- GAZZOLO, Michele B.  
 1986 Spirit Paths and Roads of Sickness: A Symbolic Analysis of Hmong Textile Designs. Masters thesis, University of Chicago.
- GRAHAM, David Crockett  
 1937 The ceremonies of the Ch'uan Miao. *Journal of the West China Border Research Society* 9: 71–119.  
 1954 *Songs and Stories of the Ch'uan Miao*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Miscellaneous Collection, vol 123, No. 1. Reprinted as *The Tribal Songs and Tales*

- of the Ch'uan Miao* in 1978 by the Chinese Association for Folklore, Asian Folklore and Social Life Monographs Vol. 103, ed. Lou Tsu-k'uang with Wolfram Eberhard. Taipei, Formosa, China: The Orient Cultural Service.
- HASSOUN, Jean-Pierre  
 1985 Littérature orale et migration chez les Hmong réfugiés du Laos. *Asie du Sud-Est et Monde Insulindien* XVI (1-4):103-38.
- HAYES, Christopher L., and Richard A. KALISH  
 1987 Death-related experiences and funerary practices of the Hmong refugee in the United States. *Omega* 18: 63-70.
- HEIMBACH, Ernest E.  
 1980 *White Hmong-English Dictionary*. Revised edition. New York: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Data Paper No. 75.
- HUDSPETH, W. H.  
 1922 The cult of the door. *Folk-Lore* Vol. XXXIII: 406-410.
- JOHNSON, Charles R., ed.  
 1985 *Dab Neeg Hmong: Myths, Legends and Folktales from the Hmong of Laos*. Minnesota: Macalester College.
- LEE, Gary  
 1986 White Hmong kinship terminology and structure. In *The Hmong World* 1, ed. Johns, Brenda, and David Strecker, 12-32. New Haven: Council on Southeast Asian Studies, Yale Center for International and Area Studies.  
 1996 Cultural identity in post-modern society: Reflections on what is a Hmong? *Hmong Studies Journal* 1 (1), <http://members.aol.com/hmongstudiesjrn/HSJ-1n1-Lee.html>. Accessed 8 July 2000.  
 1998 The Hmong living their dreams: Then and now. Keynote Address, 4th Annual Hmong National Conference, April, Denver, Colorado, [www.alrax.net.au/userdir/yeulee/Topical/Hmong%20dreams%20talk.html](http://www.alrax.net.au/userdir/yeulee/Topical/Hmong%20dreams%20talk.html). Accessed 8 July 2000.
- LEMOINE, Jacques  
 1972 L'Initiation du mort chez les Hmong. *L'Homme* XII (1): 105-34; XII (2): 85-125; XII (3): 84-110.  
 1979 La mort et ses rites chez les Hmong. In *Rituels funéraires à travers le monde*, ed. Jean Guiart, 196-207. Paris: Le Sycomore—Objets et Mondes, Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle.
- MARESCHAL, Eric  
 1976 *La musique des Hmong*. Paris: Musée Guimet.
- MORÉCHAND, Guy  
 1969 Le chamanisme des Hmong. *Bulletin de L'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* LIV: 54-294.
- MOTTIN, Jean  
 1980 *Contes et légendes Hmong Blanc*. Bangkok: Don Bosco Press.  
 1982 *Allons faire le tour du ciel et de la terre: Le chamanisme des Hmong vu dans les textes*. Bangkok: White Lotus Co.Ltd.
- MUEGGLER, Eric  
 2001 *The Age of Wild Ghosts: Memory, Violence, and Place in Southwest China*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- RADLEY, H. M.  
 1986 Economic Marginalization and the Ethnic Consciousness of the Green Mong (Mong Ntsuab) of Northwestern Thailand. PhD dissertation, Oxford University.
- RATLIFF, Martha  
 1992 *Meaningful Tone: A Study of Tonal Morphology in Compounds, Form Classes, and*

- Expressive Phrases in White Hmong*. Northern Illinois University: Center for Southeast Asian Studies. Special Report No. 27.
- RUEY, Yih-Fu  
 1960 The Magpie Miao of southern Szechuan. In *Social Structure in Southeast Asia*, ed. Murdock, George Peter, 143–55. Chicago: Quadrangle Books.
- RUSSELL, Susan D., ed.  
 1989 *Ritual, Power, and Economy: Upland-lowland Contrasts in Mainland Southeast Asia*. Northern Illinois University: Center for Southeast Asian Studies Occasional Paper No. 14.
- SCHEIN, Louisa  
 2000 *Minority Rules: The Miao and the Feminine in China's Cultural Politics*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- SCHWÖRER-KOHL, Gretel  
 1981 Sprachgebundene Mundelorgelmusik zum Totenritual der Hmong, In *Nordthailand und Laos*, 609–18. Bayreuth: Bericht über den Internationalen Musikwissenschaftlichen Kongress.
- SYMONDS, Patricia V.  
 1991 *Cosmology and the Cycle of Life: Hmong Views of Birth, Death, and Gender in a Mountain Village in Northern Thailand*. PhD dissertation, Brown University.
- TAPP, Nicholas  
 1986 Geomancy as an aspect of upland-lowland relationships. In *The Hmong in Transition*, ed. Hendricks, Glenn L., Bruce T. Downing, and Amos S. Deinard, 87–95. New York: Center for Migration Studies.  
 1989a *Sovereignty and Rebellion: The White Hmong of Northern Thailand*. Singapore, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.  
 1989b Hmong religion. *Asian Folklore Studies* 48: 59–94.  
 2000 Ritual relations and identity: Hmong and others. In *Civility and Savagery: Social Identity in Tai States*, ed. Turton, Andrew, 84–103. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon.
- THAO, Seng  
 1992a Qhuab Kev [Showing the way]. Audio recording, University of Melbourne.  
 1992b Qeej Tu Siav [Song of expiring life]. Audio recording, University of Melbourne.
- THAO, Phillipe Nompus  
 1993 *Between Two Worlds: Hmong Ethnography, Spirituality, and Ceremony for the Deceased*. Mankato, Minnesota, Master of Science dissertation, Mankato State University.
- VANG, Lue and Judy LEWIS  
 1984 *Grandmother's Path Grandfather's Way*. San Francisco: Zellerbach Family Fund, Heritage Preservation Project:Hmong Traditions.
- WESSING, Robert  
 1986 *The Soul of Ambiguity: The Tiger in Southeast Asia*. Michigan: Northern Illinois University Center for Southeast Asian Studies Monograph Series on Southeast Asia. Special Report No. 24.