

shaman's steed; a robe with headdress decked out with imagery and amulets that at once protect, empower, and transform the shaman; and, finally, a vertical axis, real or imaginary, that serves as a pole linking the underworld, earth, and heaven. By comparing the signs and symbols associated with the shaman with the signs of a journey after death ubiquitous in Early Nomadic burials it becomes apparent, according to the author, that there was a displacement of power from the early Iron Age. Furthermore, the poetry describing the shaman's journey and the process of the journey itself offer undeniable parallels with zoomorphic imagery in the period of the Early Nomads. And yet the parallelism remains only suggestive.

The author proposes that the process reflected in the Ket and Evenk mythic traditions and enfolding most archaic layers that continued through millennia was behind the elaborate stone structures of the Early Nomads and behind the enigmatic symbolic structures with which they laid their dead and their horses to rest.

The final chapter delineates the theoretical implications of the book by pulling these various traditions together. The first part presents in detail the Pontic Scythian mythic tradition according to Herodotus and the larger tradition of Near Eastern goddesses, beginning with Ninhursag and ending with Anahita/Nana. The author then focuses her attention on the Scytho-Siberian artistic tradition in its ritual context, and on Siberian mythic traditions as they are represented in ethnography. From this evidence she infers that the deer image, inherited by the Early Nomads and elaborated into the center of their symbolic systems, indicated an ecology of belief. The deer, which entered the age of the Early Nomads as a recumbent (or, more rarely, a standing) creature, was followed by predatory animals, which were in turn dismissed owing to an increasing fascination with human imagery and with realism. At the very end of the Scytho-Siberian period the deer assumed the guise of a woman seated before a male holding a rhyton (see for instance the North Pontic Chertomlyk, Karagodeuashk, the Merzhany plaques, the figures of the Prigradnaya "Scythian Baba," and the felt hanging from Altay Pazyryk 5). But it was finally eclipsed as a woman, her invisible presence being referred to only by a male figure. With the disappearance of Scytho-Siberian culture the deer was destined to persist only through the shamanic traditions of Siberia and Central Asia.

The author concludes that the deer image does not refer back to a solar hero or to Indo-European values, but is rather evidence for the emergence and gradual disappearance of a truly Siberian cosmogonic source: the Animal Mother, the source of life and death.

This book is an important contribution to the studies of Ancient Siberia offering new theoretical interpretations of the art of the nomads populating the Eurasian steppe.

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#### LAOS

MOORE-HOWARD, PATRICIA. *The Iu-Mien: Tradition and Change*. Sacramento: Sacramento City Unified School District, 1989. v + 112 pages. Line drawings, bibliography, appendices. Softcover spiral binding. No price given.

Although there are at least 10,000 Iu Mien (or Yao) people from Southeast Asia now living in the United States, the literature on this group is meager in comparison with the voluminous writings on the Hmong, their fellow refugees and former neighbors in highland Laos. For this reason, if for no other, Dr. Moore-Howard's small book is to be welcomed. Written for a very specific audience—teachers in the Sacramento public school system who may have Iu

Mien pupils in their classrooms—this book is likely to remain little known and difficult to locate outside of the North American academic library network. I believe it is useful, therefore, to bring its existence to the attention of those readers of *Asian Folklore Studies* interested in the highland peoples of southwest China and mainland Southeast Asia and, especially, in their American diaspora.

The book is presented in two parts. The first part, vital for Moore-Howard's intended readership but of limited use to specialists, is entitled "Iu Mien Tradition"; it gives a brief (though generally well-written) ethnographic sketch of the Iu Mien, based on published sources (the titles of which the author sometimes, but never consistently, cites). There is a hint, here and there, of the author's lack of familiarity with Southeast Asia (as in her definition of *padi* as "rice when it is first cut" [24]) and of some sloppiness in presentation (as when we are told on one page [17] that "the Iu Mien language...is characterized by having five tones," only to read on the very next page that "the sixth tone signal is left unmarked"). Moore-Howard's outline of Iu Mien material culture (houses, handicrafts, and clothing) is quite strong, though, and the sections on religion, the shaman, rituals of healing, and the principal rites of passage will surely provide useful insights for the average reader.

The second part, "Iu Mien Change," though much too brief, is what will most interest scholars of Iu Mien society and culture. Here we learn, for instance, that the Iu Mien community in Sacramento, California (there are sizeable congregations in the states of Washington and Oregon as well) has elected its own "record-keeper" to record the names of each newly-arriving Iu Mien family; that "parents live with their sons and share the rent in a two or three bedroom house," but if the accommodation becomes overcrowded "one or more of the family members" move to another place, as close by as possible; and that "food is bought in turn by each couple" (76). The community polices itself in accordance with traditional ideas about the linkage between wrongdoing and sickness. Thus, Moore-Howard tells us, "if a Iu Mien is found stealing, he/she must be kept at home. If the crime is not too serious, the family buys herbs to make the wrong-doer well.... If the crime is more serious, a shaman is called in to perform a curing ritual for the offending person" (76).

Decreasing dependence on welfare handouts, "a far lower criminal record than the general population," good school performance, and "the creation of active networks and cultural societies" are all indicators that the Iu Mien are coping rather well in this strange new environment of urban North America. But it has not been an easy adaptation for many of these Southeast Asian hill people, traumatized by war, grieving for loved ones killed or left behind in Laos, faced with the problems of learning a very strange language, and presented with new and puzzling ideas about intergender and intergenerational relationships. The fear that time-honored values and institutions are breaking down under such stress is hardly surprising.

In particular, Iu Mien refugees are often faced with the fundamentalist, evangelical proclivity so typical of a large segment of North American Christianity. In the face of Christian attacks on their traditional understanding of the supernatural world (which "many missionaries" are pleased to "label as devil or demon worship" [79]) and on "the shaman's role as healer of the sick and depressed and as leader of...[their] marriage and funeral rituals," some of the Iu Mien "wish they had [had] more time to think through the religious commitments that were implied by their coming to this country under the sponsorship of religious groups.... Some of the sixty-five percent of the Iu Mien who have not converted insist that there has been pressure to do so to repay kindness from their sponsors" (79). At present, says Moore-Howard, the majority of Iu Mien still remain committed to traditional ideology and practice, but there are some who "say that in America it is time for the old ways to pass" (79).

There are several important messages for the academic community in this section of *The Iu-Mien*. Two strike this reviewer particularly strongly. One is the need for a much more

comprehensive and widely distributed publication on change and continuity in Iu Mien metaphysical ideas and ritual practices in urban North America; the other (in light of Moore-Howard's comments on the overall success of the Iu Mien's adaptation to the Californian milieu) is a comparative study of the adaptive abilities of Iu Mien, Hmong, and Lowland Lao in urban North America.

The author probably never intended her book to be reviewed in a scholarly journal of this nature. I hope, nonetheless, that I have presented sufficient material to suggest its academic importance. Its practical value is surely self-evident.

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MUNDAHL, JOHN, DAVE MOORE, and YEE CHANG, Coordinators. *A Free People: Our Stories, Our Voices, Our Dreams*. Minneapolis: Hmong Cultural Awareness Project, 1994. 143 pages. Map, figs., photographic plates. Soft cover n.p.; ISBN 0-9641869-0-X.

"It's pretty easy being a Hmong kid in America because I think life's easier here than in Thailand or Laos" (125). "For me it's pretty easy being a Hmong kid in America because I don't feel different from other people or cultures. I get pretty equally treated by other people" (125). "I think being a Hmong kid in America is good. Sometimes it can be bad, too" (125). "It's hard living in America as a Hmong boy" (126). "Growing up in urban America is very hard, especially for Hmong youth" (130). "It is difficult to be a Hmong kid in America because I'm caught between two cultures.... Two things I hate about America are that you have to follow their dumb laws, and people in America don't like us because we're Hmong.... I think we shouldn't be in this stupid country" (125).

It seems the feelings of Hmong youth in their adopted (or, for some, native) land run from love to hatred and just about everything in between!

The Hmong diaspora in the United States has generated a considerable scholarly and popular literature, most of it the work of non-Hmong writers. The importance of the small book reviewed here lies precisely in the fact that it is almost exclusively the work of the Hmong themselves. Moreover, it also represents, in the words of the book's subtitle, the "stories, voices and dreams" of a crucially important Hmong generation, the first to be schooled in the American public education system. In the final analysis, whether this culture, nurtured in the mountains of southwest China and northern Southeast Asia, can survive in such an alien (and often alienating) world as that of urban North America will depend on whether or not these young men and women will cherish their "Hmongness," while yet succeeding in the American cultural melting pot.

*A Free People* is a popular work inspired by Dave Moore, a former public school teacher and leader of a Hmong boy scout troop in Minneapolis (there are now some 20,000 Hmong in Minnesota). This nicely-illustrated book (with many photographs of Hmong, their festivals and their handiwork in Southeast Asia and in America) has been published primarily for the benefit of young Hmong themselves. But it is for this very reason that I recommend it to scholars of Hmong society, culture, and folklore, as well as to all who are concerned for Southeast Asian highland peoples in the modern world. It is a fascinating view from inside