

Introduction

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NOTE: This introduction was written in the context of Hmong Studies Journal being distributed primarily via email. Since that time, email distribution has ceased; thus, some of the points mentioned are no longer relevant.

[1]

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Hmong Studies Journal (HSJ)*. This publication wouldn't exist if it weren't for the work of our contributors and editors. Thus, we all owe a great thanks to those who took the time to make *HSJ* possible.

This introduction will cover the following topics:

- Preview of the contents of this issue;
- Subscribing to the discussion list for *HSJ*;
- Citing *Hmong Studies Journal* contents; and,
- Description of formatting conventions.

[2]

A solid core of articles form the foundation for our first issue of *HSJ*. Cathy Falk leads with an intriguing textual analysis of the chants in traditional Hmong funeral ritual. Using ethnographic accounts and transcripts spanning eighty-one years and a geographic area from China to Australia, Falk shows the amazing stability of these oral texts despite conflict and the dispersal of Hmong this century. This reveals some of the deepest values constituting Hmong culture.

[3]

Gary Yia Lee, one of the first Hmong to earn a doctorate in a western country, discusses the complexities of Hmong cultural identity past, present and future. Through his dialectic analysis of factors said to determine cultural membership, Lee exposes the subtle intricacies of ethnic identity and group cohesion. Indeed, understanding the challenge of maintaining an identity in a post-modern world is an obvious necessity as we move on to the 21st Century.

[4]

Sharon Bays' article presents an essential perspective on conducting ethnographic research with a community such as the Hmong. Bays discusses much of the contemporary conflicts and struggles facing Hmong in the U.S. while also revealing the human side of research.

[5]

Rounding out this issue is Anne Frank's compilation of recent publications and research related to the Hmong. If you are new to the information available on the Hmong, or even a veteran researcher, this will furnish you with the references to bring you up to date.

[6]

Being based on the Internet, there are factors which make *HSJ* a unique enterprise. The most exciting of these is the opportunity to have what is usually nonexistent with most scholarly journals: an ongoing discussion around the topics and questions raised in the articles we publish. This dialogue is possible via the electronic mail listserv devoted to *HSJ*. Take a moment to become part of the conversation. Send an email message to "**hmong-ejournal-request@stolaf.edu**" and in the body of the message write the word "**subscribe**" followed on the same line by your first and last name. For example:

subscribe Robin Vue-Benson

You will rapidly receive an automatic reply concerning your addition to the mailing list. It is within this electronic space that we will engage in a dynamic discussion of the articles in *HSJ*. No other kind of publication offers you the same opportunity for feedback and comment. Deep thanks to Craig Rice at St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN for establishing this list for us.

[7]

While the Internet allows us to rapidly and inexpensively publish *HSJ*, it also requires the use of certain conventions in the formatting of the text. Since a variety of different means will be used to view *HSJ*, it is impossible to refer to traditional "pages" when dividing up or discussing the articles. Instead, each paragraph in an article is numbered. This number is in brackets preceding the paragraph. For example, this is paragraph 7 of the Introduction. A quote from Dr. Lee's article would be cited thus: "Cultures never hold still: they are alive, constantly evolving, adapting, being borrowed, forced upon one another" (Lee: 64). With the bibliographic citation as follows:

Lee, G.Y. (1996) "Cultural Identity In Post-Modern Society: Reflections on What is a Hmong?" *_Hmong Studies Journal_* Vol 1 No 1 October.

[8]

Similar to the inability to delineate pages as in print publications, electronic publications can not print bold, italic, underlined or italicized text (though this is possible with HTML and may cease to be a problem for email, too). Therefore, *HSJ* uses some established conventions for representing different styles of text. They are as follows:

this is for underlining;

this indicates that everything between the asterisks is emphasized (bold or italic)

^this^ means something is raised above the regular text (used primarily for footnotes, which are then placed immediately following the paragraph in which the note is indicated).

[9]

With these features in mind, please enjoy and learn from the articles we have for you in *Hmong Studies Journal* Volume One Number One. By all means, join the discussion list and interact with authors and other readers.